

Megiddo Message

Fall 2009

*W*orship the Lord God...
who has measured the
waters in the hollow of
His hand. -Isaiah 40:12



FEAR...FROM THE OTHER SIDE



How afraid should we be? Since 9/11, the Homeland Security Advisory System has attempted to answer that question by using colors to indicate the level of risk of terrorist acts. The color, ranging from green (lowest risk) to red (severe), can change at any moment. As of this writing, the monitor is YELLOW, or “Elevated.” The system was designed to keep us alert.

But terrorism is only one source of fear. To a greater or lesser degree, every unknown in our lives may be a source of fear. In this issue we are addressing these very real, human fears—and the help that God offers to help us live with those fears.

Meanwhile, I have been thinking about fear from the other side—the positive side—the healthy fear I want to cultivate in my life. In fact, I do not want to live a single moment without this fear: the fear of God. This fear is not terror. Rather, it is a deep

awe of the One who holds my **very life** in His hand. Every day I walk on His soil, breathe His air, drink His water—and have no regard for His authority? What if He suddenly says “Enough!” and cuts off my entitlement to these provisions?

I am thinking this way when I hear people like Richard Dawkins, Sam Harris, Stephen Hawking, Daniel Dennett, et al, proudly declare that we should come of age and leave our “failed imaginations” of God behind. God is a delusion, they say, and if we only use the brains we have we can solve our problems! Everything about them sends the message that they have no fear of God and no awe of His creation.

My mind goes back to the time of Noah, when a people refused to have any fear of the God who was predicting a great flood because they were flaunting His laws—until it came. I think also about Sodom and Gomorrah, prospering cities that obviously

had no fear of Divine judgment—until it struck.

What am I—but a tiny speck of life on one tiny planet—and totally dependent on resources beyond my ability to provide. What am I in the view of the Almighty Creator, who has given me everything I enjoy, including my ability to think and move and breathe—!

What is the fear of the Lord? It is a humble, submissive attitude that is awed by His greatness, worships His holiness, and respects His authority. It is a deep awe of the One who is great and good beyond my grandest imagination. That is why the “*fear of the Lord is to hate evil*” (Prov. 8:13)—because God hates evil. That is why “*the fear of the Lord*”—reverence for His authority and His right to command—“*is a fountain of life*”—eternal life (Prov. 14:27). Where else can I secure anything ETERNAL?

All of God’s people have been God-fearing, which means they recognized His awesome greatness and their own littleness. They were God-fearing, God-honoring people who trembled at His Word (Isa. 66:2).

Why did the angels who visited mortals so often speak those reassuring words, “*Don’t fear*”? They said them to Abraham, Jacob, Moses, Joshua, Gideon, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Daniel; even to the shepherds who were watching their sheep the night Jesus was born. The opening words to each were the same: “*Don’t fear*.” Why? Because the people to whom the angels came were afraid!

Of course! Put yourself in their place. Imagine that you have been praying. Or you awaken suddenly from sleep. Or you are just doing your everyday tasks when—suddenly—you hear a powerful voice calling your name. Or you feel a touch on your shoulder. Or you see a light brighter than the sun. The experiences varied, but each knew instantly that this was no normal visitor. Something told them that they were in the presence of one who had come from the high courts of heaven—an immortal being—an angel of God—one who can read

The fear of the Lord is a reverent regard for His authority and His right to command.

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FRONT COVER PHOTO: Bar Harbor, Maine. Taken by Ronald Hicks

WE BELIEVE...

- ★ in God, the Creator and sustainer of the earth, the world, the universes, and all life, in whom we "live, and move, and have our being."
- ★ in the Bible as our only source of true knowledge about God and His purposes and plans for His creation and for the salvation of humankind.
- ★ in Jesus Christ, the Son of God and our Perfect Example, who was conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of a virgin; who ministered among His brethren, was crucified, resurrected, and taken to heaven and seated at the right hand of the Father, crowned with immortal glory, and who shall shortly return to be King of the whole earth.
- ★ in the Holy Spirit, the openly manifest power of God, which God bestowed at various times and in various ways to reveal His knowledge to humankind, to support His spokesmen, to confirm His utterances, and to demonstrate His supreme power and authority.
- ★ in life as the gift of God, and in our sacred responsibility to use it for God and His coming Kingdom.
- ★ in humankind as providing the raw material from which shall be selected and developed a superior, God-honoring people upon whom God will bestow the blessings of immortal life in His soon-coming Kingdom.
- ★ in ourselves as capable, with the help of God, of applying to our own lives the precepts and principles taught in the Word of God, in this way perfecting that high quality of moral character which God has promised to recompense with life eternal in His heavenly Kingdom on earth.
- ★ in the promise of God, that Jesus Christ will soon return to rid the earth of all sin and suffering and inaugurate an eternal and worldwide Kingdom of peace and righteousness, until God's will is done here as it is now done in heaven.

Don't FEAR?

No one is a stranger to fear. Fear is our instinctive response to something we perceive as a threat to our well being, our safety, our confidence, our image, our possessions, our life, or anything we call our own. Some of those fears are good because they alert us to a danger we can avoid; others are enslaving and destructive because they are fears of something beyond our control.

There is a story about a little boy who had his first play part. All he had to do was to walk onto the stage at the right moment and say two lines. Those lines were, "It is I, be not afraid." But on the final night, when he walked onto the stage and looked into the audience, what came out was: "It's me ... and I'm scared!"

Haven't we all experienced it? We tell ourselves we won't be like this one, or that one, because we are brave! We have a strong faith in God. We won't be afraid. But let reality strike, and the very human emotion of fear takes over. Suddenly, "It's me, and I'm scared."

Fear strikes at all levels, from all sides. Perhaps you can identify with one or more of these scenarios:

- ◆ It is night, the road is icy, and the semi behind you is hovering much too close to your rear bumper.
- ◆ The company you work for announced yesterday that fifty-five people will be laid off during the next two weeks.
- ◆ Your next door neighbor's house was burglarized last night.
- ◆ You just learned that your child has a serious health problem.
- ◆ You are home alone, and you hear strange noises outside the window.
- ◆ You have just enough in the bank to pay your bills each month, when you find out that you need major dental work, which your insurance does not cover.
- ◆ Your doorbell rings in the middle of the night.

*The person who
fears and reverences God
has nothing else to fear.*

- ◆ Your teen-age son or daughter is making friends you do not approve of.
- ◆ Your boss has just told you that you are being transferred to a large city in another state.
- ◆ You have received a promotion, and are not sure you can handle your new—more difficult—duties.
- ◆ You have not been feeling well, and are waiting for the results of some medical tests.
- ◆ Car brakes screech outside your house.
- ◆ You are planning to retire next year and your 401k has plunged.
- ◆ A police officer just phoned to let you know your spouse has been in a car accident and is being taken by ambulance to the nearest hospital.
- ◆ The school has called and asked you to pick up your very sick child.

PUTTING FEAR IN PERSPECTIVE

Fear is a human emotion that God has built into our make-up, and it is usually the anticipation of something hurtful and beyond your control. But all fear is not bad.

When fear is protective...

Sometimes fear is protective. Part of our internal defense mechanism, it helps us to keep out of harm's way, or to take appropriate action to avoid a problem. Many times we can escape injury or harm because our fear makes us respond quickly to perceived danger.

Remember when as a child you were afraid of a big dog, or a snake, or the dark, or of getting lost? We even teach fear to our children. We teach them to be afraid of strangers, and wild animals, and hot stoves. These healthy fears are protective.

As we grow older, we develop other healthy, protective fears. Fear of an accident makes us cautious on the highway at intersections, on winding roads, or when conditions are less than ideal. Fear of injury makes us cautious when handling objects that could hurt us. Fear of sickness keeps us frequently washing our hands. Fear of heart attack or stroke motivates us to improve our diet and to get needful exercise. If we are older, fear of falling reminds us to walk carefully, because we don't want broken bones.

When fear is troublesome...

Beyond these innocent, protective fears is what troubles most: fear of the future, fear of the unknown. "What if..." and our minds can quickly generate endless possibilities. We fear violence, terrorism, pain, injury, disease, loss, death.

We may do our best to care for our bodies and minds with good food, good exercise, and good attitudes, and reap the benefits in improved health and well-being; but advancing years and the threats of disease keep us reminded that we are still mortal.

We may give our best to others in sincere and loving concern; but there is no guarantee that they will appreciate it.

We may secure our homes against harmful intruders, but a misguided human mind may still outwit us.

We may work hard and economize so as to lay up for our future needs; but we cannot control the economy, or the politics of our nation.

We may practice "safety first" in every area of our lives, and still be overtaken by accident.

JUST THE SAME TODAY!

*When Moses and his soldiers
From Egypt's land did flee,
Their enemies behind them,
And in front of them the sea;
And the God that lived in Moses' time
Is just the same today.*

*When Daniel, faithful to his God,
Would not bow down to man,
And by God's enemies was brought
Before them and condemned,
God shielded him from harm, we read,
They had no power to slay;
And the God that lived in Daniel's time,
Is just the same today.*

*When Jesus came, the Lord of life,
To save us from our sins,
He fought against temptations,
The victory first to win.
The Tempter did his best against
The Life, the Truth, the Way,
And the Lord who conquered evil then
Is just the same today.*

*When Peter feared that he would sink
Beneath the troubled wave
The Master's hand caught hold of him,
For Christ had power to save.
And the One whose arm was strong to help
Can be your strength and stay,
For the One who lived in Peter's time
Is just the same today.*

*And when He left this world of ours,
He said He'd come again,
To take His own to be with Him—
With Him on earth to reign.
He's coming soon to claim His throne;
The King is on His way,
For the One who promised He would come,
Is just the same today.*

*Fear and Faith cannot keep
house together. When one
enters, the other departs.*



*If God is my Keeper,
I don't have to live in fear
because God is in control.*

When fear is destructive

The fear we want most to guard against is fear that is plain worry—worry about what has not happened and which may never happen. There is nothing wrong with having legitimate concerns. Concerns focus on what is immediate, and moves us to take steps toward prevention. But fear of the unknown can be paralyzing. Demoralizing. Debilitating.

The Solution?

Actually, there is only one total solution to our fears, and that solution lies in being in the care and keeping of our Creator, God. What did the Psalmist write? *"Unless the Lord builds the house, they labor in vain who build it; unless the Lord guards the city, the watchman stays awake in vain"* (Ps. 127:1).

God does not expect us to live without fear—there are many examples in Scripture of good, God-fearing people who were afraid. But if we can qualify for His keeping, we do not have to be enslaved, paralyzed, or ruined by fear. For this reason He has given His Word to tell us who He is, and how we can become His children and benefit from His loving watchcare. God has a watchful eye over His children. He says to them again and again, "Don't fear."

Does this mean that if I am sincerely serving God I won't ever know the human emotion of fear? No. As long as we are mortal and human, we will know fear. Does it mean that if God is watching over me, I won't get sick, or lose my job, or have an accident, or lose my investments? No. But if God is my Keeper, I don't have to live in fear of these losses because God is in control.

If I qualify for His care, I can trust His promises. Absolutely!
What are those promises?

Promises, Promises!

The Word of God is filled with promises to God's children—promises so exalted in nature and so broad in scope that our finite minds can scarcely begin to comprehend them. The greatest promises are for the future. But there are also promises for here and now, promises of daily help, guidance and strength.

★ All things work for good

Promise 1: "And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose" (Rom. 8:28).

The first question to ask when reading this promise is, Do I truly love God? because that is the condition of the promise. But when trouble strikes, what is our first thought? Do we instinctively blame God, as though He had promised us perfect health, super friendships, and 141% return on every investment? On the contrary, when trouble strikes those who serve God look for the "good"—the benefit, the lesson—that can come from adversity.

As erring mortals, we need training. We need discipline. Naturally we are self-confident, self-assured. We think our opinion is right, and when it comes to making a judgment on something, of course we know! But if we do not make a conscious effort to learn and live by His laws, every one of us is a slave to sin and death.

God is looking for those whom He can train and develop to become

His sons and daughters. That is why He allows trials, suffering, and affliction. God does not *"willingly bring affliction or grief to the children of men"* (Lam. 3:33 NIV). Every test that comes to us can be used for good, for our eternal good, *"that we may be partakers of His holiness"* (Heb. 12:10). Jeremiah the Prophet was right when he said: *"O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps"* (Jer. 10:23).

Too easily our fears leave God out of the reckoning. We forget the invincible Power of the universe that is behind us, above us, underneath us and around us if we are in God's care. We foresee perils and obstacles, troubles and temptations and think we must confront them alone. But no, *"... we know that all things work together for good to those who love God,"* and whatever cannot be worked for good does not happen!

★ **Divine oversight, guidance and care**

Promise 2: *"The Lord will continually lead you; he will feed you even in parched regions. He will give you renewed strength, and you will be like a well-watered garden, like a spring that continually produces water"* (Isaiah 58:11 NET).

What a beautiful promise spoken to a people with whom God was working, who were worshiping and serving Him. This promise tells us that the true believer is not left on his own in the midst of trial and uncertainty. He has the assurance that God's eye is on those who submit willingly to His leading: *"I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you and watch over you"* (Ps. 32:8 NIV).

God's oversight of His children lifts them out of the realm of happenstance and into the sphere of His tender, loving concern. This is what David was thinking about, when in the midst of personal danger, he said, *"The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?"* (Ps. 27:1).

Feel the tender care in this message from the Lord: *"Can a woman forget her nursing child, and not have compassion on the son of her womb? Surely they may forget, yet I will not forget you. See, I have inscribed you on the palms of My hands... I, the Lord, have called you in righteousness, and will hold your hand; I will keep you..."* (Isa. 49:15–16; 42:6–7). Just picture the intimate care of God calling His children in righteousness, holding their hand, protecting and keeping them from harm.

★ **Never forsaken**

Promise 3: *"I will never leave you nor forsake you"* (Heb. 13:5).

God not only promises care but *constant* care. This promise was made first to Jacob (see Gen. 28:15) when he was about to take his large family into Egypt.

What was Moses' advice as he prepared Joshua to take on the leadership of the Israelite people? The Israelites would make trouble; they would be stubborn and unyielding—Joshua had seen it many times. But, says Moses, *"Be strong and of good courage, do not fear nor be afraid of them; for the Lord*

Trusting...Under His Wings

"He will cover you with His feathers, and under His wings you will find refuge." –Psalm 91:4 NIV

Mother birds have a powerful instinct to protect their brood. The Psalmist, well acquainted with nature, saw in this instinct an illustration of how the heavenly Father looks after His faithful children!

Several years ago National Geographic carried an article that provided a touching picture of such wings of refuge. It described how, after a forest fire in Yellowstone National Park, forest rangers began their trek up a mountain to assess the inferno's damage. One ranger came across a small bird that was literally petrified in ashes, perched like a statue at the base of a tree. Somewhat sickened by the eerie sight, he pushed the bird over with a stick—and was astonished to see three tiny chicks scurry from beneath their dead mother's wings.

This mother bird, aware of impending danger, had actually carried her offspring from a nest to the base of the tree and had gathered them under her wings, instinctively knowing that the toxic smoke would rise. She could have flown to safety but refused to abandon her babies.

The blaze and the heat had scorched her small body, and she died. But the chicks under the cover of her wings survived!

What a fitting illustration of God's care for His faithful, obedient children! Safely sheltered under His wings.



your God, He is the One who goes with you. He will not leave you nor forsake you" (Deut. 31:6).

The Lord also made the promise directly to His faithful servant Joshua, *"...the Lord your God is with you wherever you go"* (Jos. 1:9).

Centuries later the writer of Hebrews, knowing the Lord's promise still stood, repeated it yet again: *"I will never leave you nor forsake you"* (Heb. 13:5). Never, never, never!—that's a long, long, long time!

Can we claim that promise of constant protection? Can we trust God to never forsake? The answer is an absolute Yes, if we meet His conditions and do not forsake Him. *"If you seek Him, He will be found by you, but if you forsake Him, He will cast you off forever"* (1 Chron. 28:9).

★ *A Load limited to our strength*

Promise 4: “No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it” (1 Cor. 10:13).

Is not this a rich and comforting promise to those who are determined to step out from their sinful past? God has promised that we shall not be tempted above that which we are able to bear—there will always be a way out. It is easy to think, What if I can’t take it? What if the test proves too hard for me? On this we can depend: If we have committed our lives to obeying God and seeking His rewards, there will always be a way out, or a way through—it is God’s promise. And can we not trust God to know us, better than we know ourselves?

★ *Sufficient mortal life and strength to complete our work*

Promise 5: “bodily exercise profits a little, but godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come” (1 Tim. 4:8).

Here is a most reassuring promise to those whose life aim is “godliness”—living closely by God’s laws for life. Illness, disease, injury or premature death cut short many a promis-

ing career. By nature, God’s people are no exception. God has not promised a full eighty or ninety years of physical life, the use of both hands and both feet, both eyes and both ears right through to the end. But those who are sincere in aspiring to godliness have a promise that frees them from fear: “having promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come” (1 Tim. 4:8). They are promised sufficient life to qualify for the life to come—eternal life.

★ *Divine help through the angels*

Promise 6: “The angel of the Lord encamps all around those who fear Him, and delivers them” (Ps. 34:7).

How was this promise fulfilled to Moses? The Lord told Moses directly, “My Presence will go with you” (Ex. 33:14). The promised presence is not of weak men, not even of powerful men, but the presence of God through His angels. Those who fear (reverence, obey, worship) God have the promise of the providential and gracious presence of God in every time of stress or need. Hebrews 1:14 repeats the promise of angel support provided: “Are not all angels ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation?” (NIV)

The Psalmist said: “Behold, God is my helper; The Lord is with those who uphold my life” (Ps. 54:4). With God as our helper why need we fear what man may do to us? We are all by nature the children of wrath (Eph. 2:3), but once we change our rela-



Is It a TIME for FEAR?

We live in a time of fear. Economic fear. Political fear.

Fear has reached a new level as problems have taken on more frightening faces. Biological weapons and chemical weapons have opened new realms of fear. There are nations where the rulers have no scruple against the most terrorizing weapons. With terrorists working in every corner of the globe, there is very real reason for fear.

Are biological weapons and terrorists writing the last page on the history of the human race? Stephen Hawking, world renowned author and cosmologist (and atheist), made some shocking statements about the future of our world. He said, “Although September 11 was horrible, it didn’t threaten the

survival of the human race...” Sounding an alarm, Professor Hawking also said, “I am more worried about biology. Nuclear weapons need large facilities, but genetic engineering can be done in a small lab. You can’t regulate every lab in the world. The danger is that either by accident or design, we create a virus that destroys us.”

He also made this alarming prediction, “I don’t think the human race will survive the next thousand years...”

Is it just about over? Should we be filled with fear about the future? Is the human race staring extinction in the face? The answer is NO!

Although as a professor Mr. Hawking has a broad knowledge of this world, he does not have knowledge of the future because he has not consulted the Word of God. Those who know God’s plan for this earth and its people know that God is in control, and that He will not allow the devastation of the earth or its civilization. Looking at the current world picture, one can easily be fearful. But looking at the plan of its Creator, we know that we do not need to fear.

Why? The Bible prophesied the present turmoil. Jesus said there would be “wars and rumors of wars” (Matt. 24:6). The Bible prophesied that in the last days before Jesus’ return, men’s hearts will be failing them from fear (see Luke 21:26). This prophecy is fulfilled today as we could have never imagined. When nuclear power was first discovered, that seemed

tionship to God by learning and applying His saving knowledge, He becomes our Father and ever present help (Ps. 46:1).

★ **Divine help through prayer**

Promise 7: *“And whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do those things that are pleasing in His sight” (1 John 3:22).*

Can we pray anywhere, anytime, and know that God will hear and help? This is His promise, but there are conditions we must meet to have assurance that God hears. The apostle John tells us what prayer will be heard: *“If we ask anything according to His will, He hears us” (1 John 5:14).*

There are barriers through which the Lord will not hear. It is not that His hand is short, or His ear dull, *“but your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear” (Isa. 59:1–2).*

The Psalmist knew that His prayers were heard. *“If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear. But certainly God has heard me; He has attended to the voice of my prayer” (Ps. 66:18–19).* Again he said, *“... the Lord has set apart for Himself him who is godly; the Lord will hear when I call to Him” (Ps. 4:3).*

All of God’s people in all ages have found help through prayer. Abraham prayed, Elijah prayed, David prayed, Nehemiah prayed, Daniel prayed, Jesus prayed. Jesus had total confidence in His connection with His Father. At the graveside of Lazarus He said, *“I know that You always hear Me”*

(John 11:42), and thanked God even before Lazarus came forth from the grave! If we are making a serious effort to qualify as His people and belong to His family, we have the same assurance that God will hear us also!

“**Having obtained help from God...**”

The apostle Paul, when making his defense before King Agrippa, spoke with warm assurance about God’s help. Despite the fury of his countrymen because of his acceptance and proclamation of the Christian Way, he still believed that God was with him. Listen to his words: *“For these reasons the Jews seized me in the temple and tried to kill me. Therefore, having obtained help from God, to this day I stand, witnessing both to small and great, saying no other things than those which the prophets and Moses said would come” (Acts 26:21–22).* Paul was in God’s service and God was his helper.

God’s ear is not deaf, but there are conditions to be met by each of those who would receive His guidance. *“He leads the humble in what is right, teaching them his way” (Ps. 25:9 NLT).* Only the meek will He guide in judgment, only the meek will He teach His way. And there is a reason: only the meek will be taught and guided, all others know too much or don’t care. They do not want teaching.

God has promised to guide all who are willing to be guided. As in the Wilderness, as in the days of the Patriarchs and Prophets, as in the days of the early Church, just so today God is with every faithful, obedient child. **MM**

like the perfect fulfillment. But today’s terrorism has surpassed it in creating personal, localized fear. Such developments only tell us that God can see the future where we cannot.

What should our reaction be to the present turmoil? Listen to Jesus: *“See that you are not troubled; for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet” (Matt. 24:6).* In other words, don’t worry.

In fact, Jesus combined the prophecy of *“men’s hearts failing them from fear”* with the promise of His return and said, *“When these things begin to happen, look up and lift up your heads, because your redemption draws near” (Luke 21:26–28).* In other words, when the world around you is filled with fear, it is time to rejoice! The worldwide trouble only means that a great change is on our doorstep! *“Your redemption”—your deliverance—“draws near.”* Jesus’ message is not one of gloom and doom, but of radiant hope!

Does the outlook for the future of man’s governments look bleak? Some wonder if our children perhaps won’t even have a world in which to live. But in the Divine picture, things have never been so bright! Never has any people ever been so near to the reality of the glorious hope, the return of Jesus Christ to take the reins of earth’s government and bring peace and righteousness worldwide (Isa. 32:17–18; 25:9).

Whatever the predictions of the wise of this world, God Himself has told in His Word the Bible what *will* be. And a mass destruction by terrorists, or by any weapons of war, is not in the picture. *“For thus says the Lord, who created the heavens, who is God, who formed the earth and made it, who has*

established it, who did not create it in vain, who formed it to be inhabited: ‘I am the Lord, and there is no other’” (Isa. 45:18).

How timely are these words today! *“[God] did not create it in vain, [He] formed it to be inhabited.”* What goodness on the part of God to cause these words to be recorded for us, we who would live in these fear-filled days.

The bible has another special promise for our time that shows God’s creation is eternal and not to be destroyed by human hands. We read: *“I know that whatever God does, it shall be forever. Nothing can be added to it, and nothing taken from it” (Eccl. 3:14).* No matter how many weapons, or how powerful these weapons may be, even if men have the capability of destroying the earth itself, God’s plans will not be *altered—“nothing can be added to it, and nothing taken from it.”*

A passage from Nehemiah is reassuring of the watchcare of God. Nehemiah cries unto the Lord, *“You alone are the Lord; You have made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth and everything on it, the seas and all that is in them, and You preserve them all. The host of heaven worships You” (Neh. 9:6).* God is not going to allow their destruction—*“You preserve them all”—the earth, the seas, and all that is in them.*

Yes, God has plans for planet earth. And that plan is a worldwide Kingdom right here on earth. He plans to extend heaven to take in our little earth, glorified and made over new! God *is* working out His plan. It is not just a notion, or an idea. He has decreed: *“...as truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord” (Num. 14:21).* In the words of the Lord’s Prayer, *“Your kingdom come, Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven” (Matt. 6:10).*

May it come soon, is our prayer! **MM**

Psalm 121

1. I lift up my eyes to the hills—
where does my help come from?
2. My help comes from the Lord,
the Maker of heaven and earth.
3. He will not let your foot slip—
he who watches over you will not slumber;
4. indeed, he who watches over Israel
will neither slumber nor sleep.
5. The Lord watches over you—
the Lord is your shade at your right hand;
6. the sun will not harm you by day,
nor the moon by night.
7. The Lord will keep you from all harm—
he will watch over your life;
8. the Lord will watch over your coming and going
both now and forevermore.

Our Keeping God

“You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on You, because he trusts in You” (Isa. 26:3)

Can we trust the Lord's keeping in the 21st century? With our really big problems of terrorism, and violence, and war, and hate in the world, can we trust God to

know how to keep His children safe?

David had problems, too. Some very close, personal problems that threatened his life day after day, year after year. He knew the meaning of fear as few of us ever experience. Where did he turn for help? What did he say: “Whenever I am afraid, I will—” panic? fear? run? Probably all of these, plus one more. “Whenever I am afraid, I will trust in You.”

What was David's level of confidence in God? Turn to Psalm 121. Read it. Meditate upon it. Then ask, what must I do to have the protection of David's keeping God?

LOOK UP!

“I will lift up my eyes to the hills,” wrote the Psalmist. “Where does my help come from?” he asks. The Authorized Version suggests that David was trusting the hills to help him. But most translators turn the emphasis toward the God David was trusting. David realized his help did not come from the hills. He looked above the hills and said, “My help comes from the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth” (Ps. 121:1–2 NIV). He was lifting his thoughts to God. His source of help was not the hills or the mountains but the high and holy Creator, the One whose glory the heavens declare and whose handiwork the whole earth shows forth (Ps. 19:1).

GOD'S KEEPING

The Psalmist looked for help in a specific situation: when his foot was in danger of slipping. “He will not let your foot slip. He who watches over you will not slumber” (Ps. 121:3 NIV). God knows how easily we can slip and fall. We take a courageous stand, then we fear—have second thoughts about it. What is the Psalmist's confidence? “He will not let your foot slip” if your total trust is in Him.

GOD NEVER SLEEPS

“Indeed, he who watches over Israel will neither slumber nor sleep” (Ps. 121:4 NIV). God is not like the human sentinel, likely to fall asleep at his post. God does not get tired. Humans get tired, but God? Never! His watchful eye is always on His people. “Behold, he that keeps Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep.” What a beautiful expression of God's constant care over His faithful children!

GOD'S EVER PRESENT HELP

“The Lord watches over you—the Lord is your shade at your right hand” (Ps. 121:5 NIV).

We need help, because we are vulnerable on all sides. The right hand is the hand we use most readily for defense. What is the Psalmist saying? God can be our defense, no matter where the attack comes from. An assault is most likely at our weakest point—our courage, or our faith, or our pride. Because we are all vulnerable, we need our powerful Defender always at our right hand.

We need help, because we are also vulnerable at all times. Think about that promise: “The sun will not harm you by day, nor the moon by night” (Ps. 121:6 NIV). Day or night God is protecting; for to the Lord “the night shines as the day” (Ps. 139:12). He is always on duty.

No power on earth, great or small, can harm us if God is our keeper.

NO FAIL INSURANCE?

Does this mean the believer will never have an accident, never get sick, never suffer from another's injustice or ill will? Not at all. But the promise is that God will still keep. Through adversity or sunshine, God will keep. He will preserve. He will not allow anything to defeat the child of His love, the one who is His committed servant, who is seeking eternal blessings in His kingdom. “All things” will work together for the eternal good of those who “love God,” those who are “called according to His purpose” (Rom. 8:28). “The Lord will keep you from all harm—he will watch over your life” (Ps. 121:7 NIV).

THE KEEPING TERMS

What is the formula for being sure of God's keeping? Is God's keeping universal or is it conditional?

There is always a condition stated. Take, for exam-

ple, the lesson from the old servant who was sent by his master Abraham on an important errand. Meeting with hearty success on his mission he gave as the explanation, *"I being in the way, the Lord led me"* (Gen. 24:27). If we want to be assured of the Lord's leading, it is our duty to keep *"in the way."*

We must also remember that God does not always lead as we might choose. Sometimes it is through green pastures and by still waters. Other times He may lead us over steep and thorny paths—for our development.

God knows our capabilities, He tests our strength. Didn't God give Abraham the supreme test—to prove his genuine faith in Him, so that Abraham could be the father of all who believe? (Rom. 4:11). Didn't Jesus show the brave Paul how much he had to suffer for His name?

For the committed Christian life is a struggle of flesh against spirit. Wherever there is spirit (the higher desire, governed by the Word of God—Rom. 8:6–7; John 6:63), there is also flesh (the natural desire to go our own way, contrary to God's commands—Eph. 2:3). That is why Paul says: *"Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish"* (Gal. 5:16–17).

What do we do when the battle is intense? *"Walk in the spirit,"* walk according to God's law of life, following Jesus—(Luke 9:23); and the Lord will *"keep you from all harm—he will watch over your life"* (Ps. 121:7 NIV).

MORE KEEPING

How often the same note swells out in other songs of David, he who so often needed the Lord's keeping. *"I will say of the Lord, 'He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust.' He will cover you with his feathers, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness will be your shield and rampart... God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear..."* (Ps. 91:2, 4; 46:1 NIV). What beautiful symbols of protection! Covered with His feathers—under His wings—our very present help in trouble. Such hope-inspiring, faith-strengthening promises!

The apostle Peter (1 Pet. 1:5) said we are *"kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation."* What is the power of God? It is the gospel (Rom. 1:16). In and of itself, the gospel, the word of life is powerless. But as we believe it and as it works effectively in our hearts (2 Thess. 2:13), as we obey it and live by it (Gal. 5:24–26), it has power—power to cleanse and purify, power to keep us from sinning (Rom. 6:10–11), and ultimately power to deliver us from death! The promise of God is: *"I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from*

death. O Death, I will be your plagues! O Grave, I will be your destruction!" (Hos. 13:14).

When we are *"kept by the power of God,"* we have the assurance that *"The angel of the Lord encamps all around those who fear Him, and delivers them... Are they [the angels] not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister for those who will inherit salvation?"* (Ps. 34:7; Heb. 1:14). In these troubled times we need the protection of God's angels.

NOW AND FOREVERMORE

What is the Psalmist's concluding thought? *"The Lord will watch over your coming and going both now and forevermore"* (Ps. 121:8 NIV). Going out and coming in are sacred steps for those who walk with God. Just how constantly should the laws of God be our companion? King Solomon was inspired to write: *"Bind them continually upon your heart; tie them around your neck. When you roam, they will lead you; when you sleep, they will keep you; and when you awake, they will speak with you"* (Prov. 6:21–22).

Such attention to the word of God should keep us always alert, whether we are at work, at school, with strangers, or at home with our family and friends.

Such spiritual exercise will keep our feet from places where God's holy standard might be debased or disregarded. It should keep us mindful of the One to whom we belong and whom we serve.

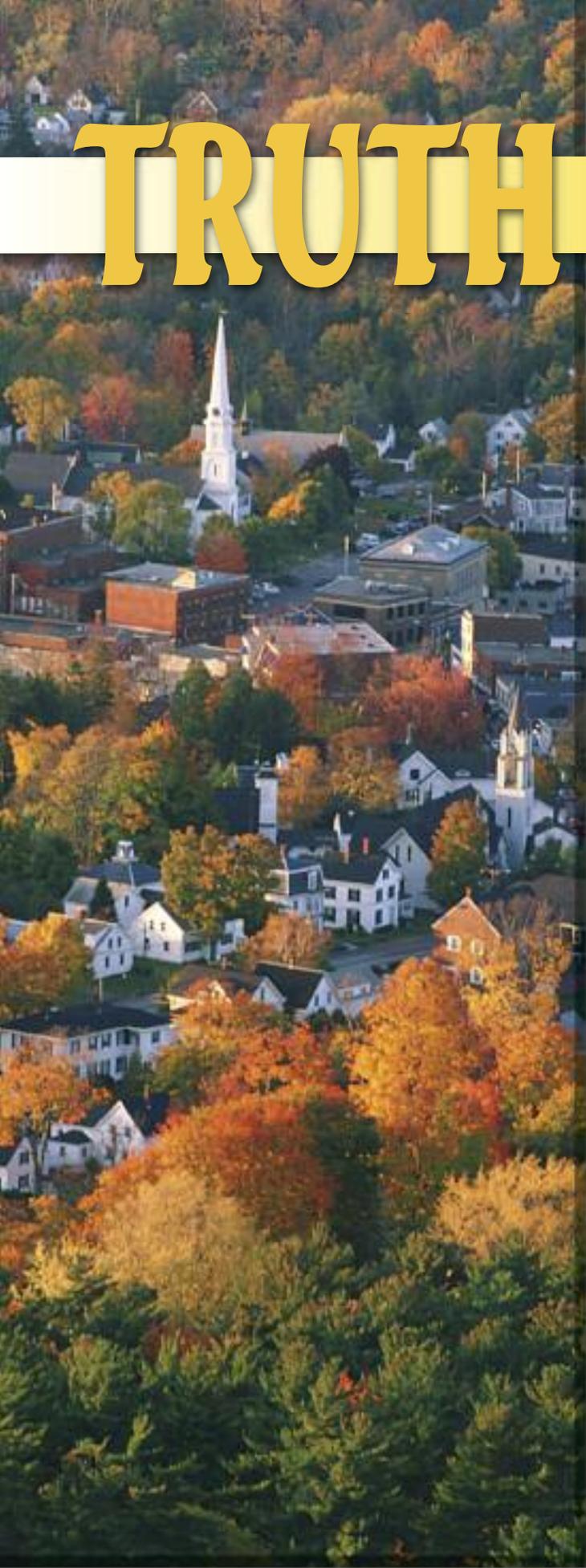
How long will the Keeping God be keeping such a one? *"Both now and forevermore."*

If we do our little part to show that we belong to Him and merit His safe shelter, Jehovah will protect us in eternal safety. Again and again throughout His Book of instruction, the promise is repeated. We won't have to fear pain, or loss, or war, or terror, or harm, or even death itself. But His promise is always to those who "keep" His law, His statutes, His ways, His testimonies.

God's boundless promise is stated one final time in the closing words of the Book: *"Blessed are they that do [keep] his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city"* (Rev. 22:14). Those inside the gate shall be eternally kept, and granted a share in all the life and glory and eternal delight that lies beyond (Ps. 16:11; 36:7–9)! **MM**



God's promises are to those who "obey" His law, His statutes, His ways, His testimonies.



TRUTH INTO LIFE

In an age when every individual feels free to supply his or her own definition of “truth”, the value of truth is hidden. But truth—God’s truth, Bible truth, the truth as dictated by the written Word of God, still stands.

Even so, truth is powerless unless it is applied. The most perfect knowledge can yield no benefit unless applied. The most healing medication must actually be used by the patient before the patient can be restored to health. The ideal government must be set up and operative before it can benefit its citizens. The blueprint of the most elaborate structure must be changed into steel, and rods, and glass, and wood by those who know how to interpret it, before it can provide shelter and usefulness. The most perfect food must be eaten and digested before it can give strength and well-being.

In the same way, true religion must become truth in the believer’s life before its full value can be known. True religion can benefit and bless only as it is used to refine and refashion human life. Such was the religion of the Master. Jesus came teaching a gospel of truth in life. In His parable of the House Built on the Rock or on the Sand, He made the staggering claim that truth is valid only as it is applied. It is an imperious demand, but there is no coming to terms with Jesus. Emotion is no substitute for obedience. Nor is hearing a substitute. One must hear and act upon what has been heard. Only action gives life to truth! If we do not act at once, chances are we will not act at all.

Such was the teaching the founder of the Megiddo Church, the Rev. L. T. Nichols, saw in the Word of God. The Bible message is more than a law to be read, more than a gospel to be heard, more than mere words; it is a life to be lived. Truth must be brought into life before its benefits can be obtained. And so, once Mr. Nichols had determined that the Bible did indeed set a high and difficult standard, the life of obedience became everyday, serious business bringing truth into life.

How? During the 1880’s, when Mr. Nichols’ ministries had taken him to the state of Oregon, he held each spring a series of camp meetings during which his followers assembled for a few weeks to learn more of the principles of their faith. Using homey illustrations, Mr. Nichols sought to touch their hearts and consciences with the worth and power of truth in life, with benefits reaching all the way into the eternal Kingdom of Christ.

Everyday Issues

The following are excerpts from Mr. Nichols' camp meeting addresses in the year 1882. The illustrations may be out of date, but the lessons are timeless. For though some aspects of life have changed with the times, the deadly inner struggle with human nature remains the same.

On Enthusiasm

Whatever a man's practical convictions are, his enthusiasm will run in that channel. We see this almost daily. Let a chance to obtain a fortune come up, or an avenue to worldly honor or wealth, and see how the average man of the world is wide awake and filled with enthusiasm.

A good illustration of this happened when I was at Brother Craft's. Some of the brothers wanted to go out to kill some venison, and invited me to walk with them for recreation. I consented, and we started out. We were all walking leisurely along, when all at once the hounds began to bay but a little way from us. Away went Brother Craft and Brother Morris on a dead run, filled with enthusiasm and excitement. All conversation instantly ceased, and these brothers' enthusiasm was so stirred that they exerted all their energy to get onto the run where they thought the deer would pass. They seemed to forget everything else and became all absorbed in one object.

If we could only forget all else but the Kingdom for which we are striving, if we could become as absorbed in the work of the Lord as our brethren were to procure that venison, I feel certain that everyone of us would obtain it.



Faith Produces Enthusiasm

Our actions will be just according to our faith. If we have real faith, our lives will show it. Our enthusiasm will be strong.

Our faith is but a conviction produced by our acquaintance with the facts. The reason that so few have this faith is that they will not read and become acquainted with the facts. They turn aside after the pleasures and business of this world, which more or less monopolizes the mind and leaves the facts of God's truth little opportunity to obtain power with them.

Before we can please God in all things, we must have a thorough conviction of what we profess. To be sure there must be some vim and enthusiasm to start with, or we can never glorify God as we should. But enthusiasm alone will not produce the result, it requires something to stir it up.

If we can find the real facts that existed in the minds of Jesus and Paul, then we can learn what led them to abjure the ordinary satisfactions of life, to leave refined society, leave all worldly prospects and pleasures and throw themselves wholly and solely into a matter which the wise of the world look upon as folly. If we can do as Jesus and His apostles did, and think as they thought, the same results should follow.

Finding Christ

How can Christ become "all in all" with us? Where can we find His knowledge, His wisdom, in order to obtain His friendship? There is nothing to tell us of Him in any of our surroundings. The crowded thoroughfares all speak to us that the friendship of Christ is vain.

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Be Kind

Are we not commanded to “*be kindly affectioned one to the other with brotherly love*”? Also we are to prove ourselves genuine servants of God “*by longsuffering; by kindness*” (2 Cor. 6:6). Paul to his Colossian brethren tells us to “*put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels [or feelings] of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering;...and above all things...put on charity [or love], which is the bond of perfectness*” (Col. 3:12, 14). What lovely principles to be governed by! These commandments were not written simply for us to be governed by them when our old flesh man feels like it, but we must let them govern us at all times, when we feel like it and when we do not feel like it.

We MUST be kind at ALL times to become like Jesus our pattern. Because we have a headache, or are not feeling well in some way, this will not excuse us from being kind; but under all circumstances, we must be kind and let not one cross word escape our lips. And seeing all have been more or less at times pettish and peevish, and some are still so, there is great need to have this point agitated until we become clear of such miserable feelings and actions.

Many act as though God had said to us, when you are sick and do not feel well, or when things do not go just to suit you, then you can be cross, snarling and unkind; at least you can be a little cross. But when you are well and all things go just to suit you, then you must be clothed with kindness and humility.

Let us consider for a moment. Would there be any virtue in such? No, not any. Therefore, it is under trying circumstances that God calls upon us to put on feelings of mercy and kindness, longsuffering and meekness, or as Peter has told us (1 Pet. 2:19–20), “*if [any one] for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully.*”

Not only are we called upon to be patient and kind when we do not feel well physically, but also to be patient and kind when misused and buffeted because we do right. Here is a trial that all have not as yet overcome, when they know they have done exactly right, then someone comes upon them pell-mell (so to speak,) and blames them for it. First thing they know, they become impatient, and instead of kind words being used which turn away wrath, grievous words are used, and anger is stirred up (Prov. 15:1). This must be stopped, and under all circumstances, let them be what they may, we must exercise patience and be kind. Kindness is one of the Christian graces that Peter tells us that we must add to our faith. And not only are we to add to our faith, but we are told that it must be in us and flow out. “*He that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off*” (2 Pet. 1:9).

Peter then exhorted, “*Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure; for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall*” (v. 10). And among the virtues that we must not only possess, but abound in is brotherly kindness (vs. 7–8).

CONTINUED ON PAGE 16

Everyday Issues CONTINUED FROM PAGE 13

The busy shops, the exchange, the market, the wharves the warehouses, the workshops all seem to join to say that all such hope is but a myth.

Nor can we find Him portrayed in the offices, the homes, the families, the laboratories, even the churches—the whole superstructure of this present evil world speaks out to us that the hope of Christ is unreal and but a myth.

Nor can we learn of Christ and His friendship from nature. All nature is silent as death as to Christ, His friendship or what must be done to procure it. Nature, in her majestic wisdom and solitude, only speaks of a Master, of a great Creator somewhere, and a purpose superior to her greatness. Nature alone can give us no knowledge of future hope. It can only fill our minds with wonderment.

We must seek the knowledge of God where it can be found. And nowhere can it be found except in the Word which He caused to be written for our learning, the Word of truth proclaimed, by Jesus and the apostles. The naturalist is only a beholder and admirer of the grand features of nature, without access to the God behind it and to His magnificent purposes.

As we study the Word of God our hope will brighten, encouraging every true believer to continue steadfast unto the end. And the bright day of eternal glory will grow brighter and brighter before us, as we look forward to standing with Jesus and enjoying the comfort, bliss and happiness of that endless day.

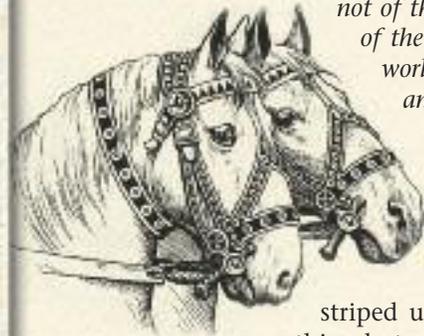
Beware of Pride

The Divine Record plainly teaches that among other things, the very last vestige of pride must be laid aside. Let us not deceive ourselves, for pride is in almost all things done, said, or worn.

Pride is of the *Diabolos* [Greek, *devil*], not of God. We are told not even to respect the proud. “*Blessed is that man that maketh the Lord his trust, and respecteth not the proud*” (Ps. 40:4). “*Pride goeth before destruction*” (Prov. 16:18). “*The lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is*

not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof” (1 John 2:16–17).

What are our hacks, buggies, and wagons all striped up for? Is it for anything but pride? What are our harnesses all silver mounted for? Only to satisfy our pride.



What are ribbons, feathers, tucks, frills, ruffles, and a host of other gewgaws worn for? Is it not to satisfy pride? It is nothing else.

Why do we rein up our team when we meet anyone? Simply because we want to show them off. It is only pride. I can speak from experience. All who know me know I have always liked a team that could show off, and many a time have I, just as I was meeting someone, chirped to my horses, cracked the whip slightly, and had my team all prancing when we were passing. All this is of the flesh, not of the Father.

Would anyone think of wearing bracelets, earrings, or finger rings if no eye was ever to see them? Why have we decorated our houses? See the fancy moldings I put upon my own house years ago. I can tell you just what every honest-hearted one must say, that I put them there solely for pride, just to be seen of men. And now, how many times I have regretted that I ever put them there.

Do we realize that if we are not willing to root out every branch of the old, deep-rooted tree of pride, we are but branches of the old Upas* tree of infidelity? We may try to get around it, but the Divine record is plain, too plain to be disputed. We must be clothed with humility, abound in meekness, be adorned with a broken and contrite spirit if we would be owned and richly blessed by our Master when He returns.

Watch Out for Poison

A table might be well spread with delicious food, but if a few grains of poison were mixed in, poison such as will produce certain death, we would not want to touch any. So with spiritual food; if we mix in even a few grains of spiritual poison with that which is Divine truth, eternal death may be the result. **Little grains of poison are the most dangerous.**

Not only must we analyze all our spiritual food but we must label that which is poison so that we will not partake of it accidentally or give it to others.

Anything done to satisfy a lust of the flesh is poison. Anything worn or said merely to attract attention is spiritual poison.

Let us act as wisely in our spiritual fare as we do in our temporal, and eradicate every evil from our minds. We do not want to eat any poison in any form.

Although poison may be sweet to the taste, once we have learned its harmful effects it will become distasteful, repugnant, and obnoxious to us. So it is in reference to the spiritual poison. Satisfying the desires of the flesh may be very sweet and delicious to the old nature. But when we realize that it leads to eternal death, how repugnant it will become.

Get All, Spend All

In this age of caprice, self-aggrandizement and folly, this age of pride, fashion and arrogance, the philosophy of multitudes has become sordid and self loving. Their principles are get-all, save-all, keep-all, spend-all, and all for the desires of their ungodly lusts. The time is not far distant when get-all and spend-all for the flesh will be buried forever in one huge pit of eternal oblivion.

On Paying Debts

You have seen the anger reaped upon me because I would not countenance dishonesty in any form. The storm broke when I would no longer fellowship several because they were not honest in paying their store bills, and violated their word. They became angry because I testified that their works were evil. I cannot countenance such and at the same time maintain an uncompromising stand for truth. It is dishonest.

How to Overcome

Did you ever know a habitual drunkard, or swearer to cease their bad habits entirely? I have, and no doubt you all have. Do you not see that if one habit can be broken off, all can? It is but folly to think that we cannot leave off every bad habit and



The lust of the eye, the pride of life will pass away (1 John 2:16-17).



*Upas tree: noun

1. a tropical Asian tree, the milky sap of which has been used as arrow poison and for ritual purposes.

It is not a difficult task for us to be kind here at meeting, when our minds are being enriched by the teachings of the Spirit. But let each one commence this kindness at home with their families: commence today, and from this time on, never speak one cross or unkind word to wife, husband, or any one else; but always talk in a pleasant and kindly way. And always be courteous to each other: for we are commanded (1 Pet. 3:8) to all *“be ye all of one mind...love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous: Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing: but contrariwise blessing; knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing. For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile: Let him [avoid] evil and do good; let him seek peace and ensue it”* (vs. 10–11).

If we desire to live eternally, we MUST become kind and courteous. Hence, let us commence in earnest now.

Let us go back in mind to our homes, when we have been all alone, just our family with us, and see if we have not many times been guilty of speaking cross and unkind words to some of the household. Let us see if we cannot think of some time that we said something we would have been deeply ashamed to have had any of the brethren hear. I am certain that we will not all prove to be innocent. (One brother is frank to own that he is not innocent.)

I have stopped at places where I would hear an uproar within, but as soon as the knock at the door was heard, all was as still as night. Why did they not keep right on with what I call jawing, cross, unkind words? Simply because they were ashamed to have another hear them. So it is with us. If we could only get so ashamed of such conduct that we would never indulge in it, would not that please the Lord?

Brother, would you use cross and unkind words to your wives if you knew that your servant was just outside the door and could hear all you said? Brother Lee says No.

If we are ashamed to have others know that we are at any time cross, how much more ashamed we should be to have our nearest, dearest, Best Friends witness it.

Now Jehovah, the great and beneficent One and His Son Jesus the meek and lowly One are our Best Friends, and They are always just outside the door. *“[For] the eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good”* (Prov. 15:3). Although we cannot see Them, They are always listening.

So whenever we speak cross or unkind words to any of the brethren of Christ, we are speaking cross to Jesus. We are commanded to *“Cease from anger, and forsake wrath”* (Ps. 37:8). We are commanded to *“Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice: and be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another”* (Eph. 4:31–32).

Let this be our motto: Never speak cross or unkind to Jesus. Let us be kind to our wives, husbands, children, and brothers and sisters and everyone else, at home or abroad. Let us act toward our brothers and sisters in Christ as we would act toward Jesus, for if we are the least unkind to anyone of the least of them, we are unkind to Christ Jesus. Write upon cards, your heart, *“Never Speak Cross Or Act Unkind To Jesus.”*

CONTINUED ON PAGE 18

overcome so that we will not sin. It is perfectly reasonable that it can be done. I know by experience that it can be done.

About Jestng and Joking

Take the habit of jesting and joking. Who was ever more given to it than I? All who know me know that I am of a lively turn and naturally love glee. And those who know me most know that I have overcome it, so that I no longer have any desire to jest or joke. Truly if I can overcome this, I can overcome any other sin.

If we could only realize the value of the great prize which will be given the overcomers in that soon-coming age of glory, we could overcome all our evil tendencies.

Understand All?

A minister said to me, “You say we must understand everything in the Bible, believe it, and obey it, before we can be saved. I would like to have chapter and verse for that.” I replied that we must believe all the teachings of Jesus, and His apostles, and believe and obey them in order to be saved. But I do not believe, that we have to know everything in the Bible in order to be saved.

For example, the Bible tells us that the *“meek shall inherit the earth”* (Ps. 37:11). Now there are many other places in the Bible that teach the same point; we may not know them all, yet believe the true teaching of the Bible

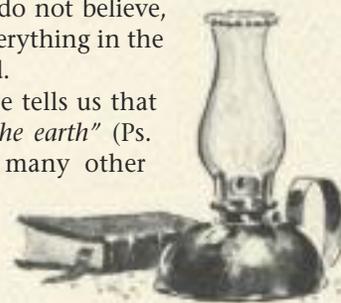
upon that point. Or suppose that there are one hundred and one texts of Scripture upon the nature of man; we may arrive at a knowledge that man when dead is wholly unconscious from five of these texts.

The Bible abounds with types, visions, parables, hyperboles, symbols, allegories. We may be ignorant of these and still understand the plain teachings of the Bible. Hence, it is not necessary to understand every word, verse, or chapter in the Bible to be saved.

How to Keep From Getting Mad

Are we not commanded to let patience have her perfect work, that we may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing? (Jas. 1:4).

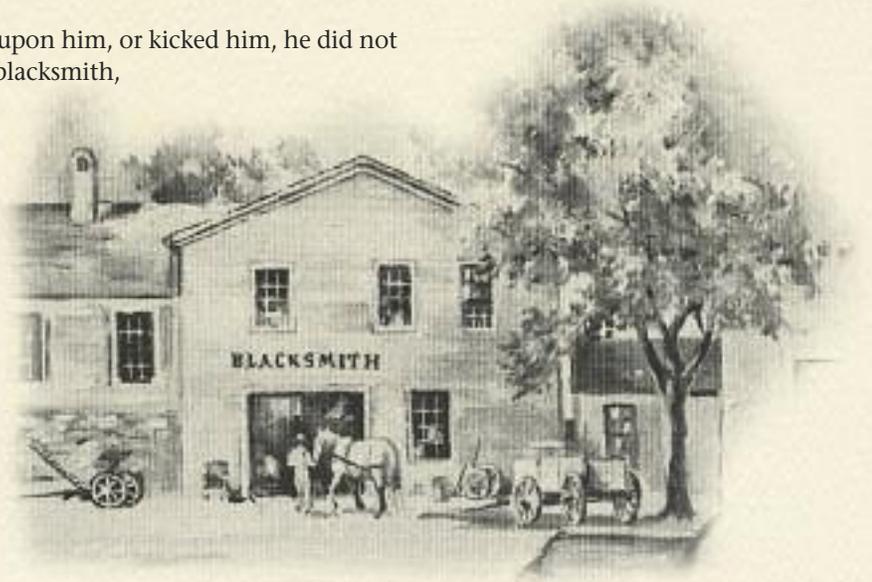
One day last winter I was talking to a blacksmith at Quincy, Illinois, by the name of Mr. Goodapple, upon the subject of patience. Mr. Goodapple said that if an ugly horse was brought



to his shop to be shod, and the horse began to lay down upon him, or kicked him, he did not think that he could keep from getting mad. I said to the blacksmith, "Suppose I should bring in the worst horse you ever shod. Suppose I should deposit \$1,000 in the bank at Quincy subject to your order, upon the condition that you would not become mad or show the least sign of anger while shoeing that horse." Did he think he could do it? Oh! he thought for \$1,000—of course he could keep from getting mad!

I asked him, and so I ask you: what is \$1,000 compared to living in that age of eternal glory? It is a mere speck, a mere nothing by comparison. If you could keep from getting mad for \$1,000, how much easier it ought to be for that inestimable reward!

The great difficulty is a lack of true, genuine faith in the Word of God. If you really believed that by overcoming all evil you would receive the prize; if you had unbounded faith in it, there would be no difficulty getting rid of your sins.



On Hospitality

I hope no one here will ever be guilty of looking after [respecting] the wants of the rich and well-to-do while neglecting the poor. We are commanded to *"Use hospitality one to another without grudging."* We may use hospitality without grudging toward some members of Christ's body, but we must show hospitality to all of the body of Christ, be hospitable to all of the loved ones in Christ. We are commanded (Heb. 13:1-2), *"Let brotherly love continue. Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares."*

Who would like to be guilty of turning an angel away? No one would want to do this, so let us use hospitality without grudging.

I know some who fear that we will be imposed upon by pretenders if we are hospitable, but do not fear. I had rather feed forty who professed and were only practicing deception than to turn away one true believer in Christ.

Of course, we are not commanded to entertain impostors or stragglers. An angel will not come to us with breath scented with liquor, or with a quid of tobacco or a cigar in his mouth. If we turn such away, we need feel no uneasiness whatever. Indeed, it would be decidedly wrong for us to share our hospitality with any such, without remuneration. What obligation have we to clothe, feed, or aid any who indulge in such things? They must first dispense with their filthy tobacco and demoralizing liquor before we show hospitality to them. There is one exception: if one has manifested a sincere desire to know the truth, we must share our hospitality with them without remuneration.

Charity Is...

Bible charity is very important for us to understand. The apostle Paul wrote, *"Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing."* (1 Cor. 13:1-3).

Charity is the center string upon which all else is hung, upon which all else depends. But we will find this Bible charity is no simple virtue. We may feed and clothe the poor in Christ, yet this alone does not constitute charity. Neither does having a knowledge of all the principles of the Bible constitute charity, though this is necessary. What, then, is Bible charity?



No Harsh Words

Let me illustrate what I mean by cross and unkind words. One brother says to another, "I have something against you, and I want it straightened up. We are commanded not to lie to one another. I told you something yesterday and you promised not to tell anyone of it, and you have done just what you agreed not to do." The second brother replies in somewhat of an excited tone, "I have done no such thing. I never told you that I would not tell." The other replies back, "I say you DID," and the other says, "Well, I know I DID NOT," and so it goes on and on.

Is this the way for Christians to talk to each other? It is not. How much better if, when the first brother accused the second, the second brother had replied in a cool, deliberate, kind and meek way, "I think there must be some mistake somewhere, for I have no recollection of saying that I would not tell. I remember your saying that you did not wish certain ones to know about it, and I had respect for you and have been careful not to say anything about it to any who I thought would carry it to the individuals you mentioned. What was my reason for saying anything about it? The same reason that you had for telling me: I thought others ought to know of it so that they could be watching. I want to keep the golden rule, and do to others as they would do to me." Would not such a reply have changed the whole course of the conversation?

But, says one, speaking of the second brother's sharp reply, "That is only his way. He did not mean anything by it." Ah! There is just the trouble, it is our way, but we must get rid of our way and accept the way of the Lord.

Furthermore, we are commanded to shun all appearance of evil. If we do not mean any harm by speaking short and crossly, why do we do it? Does it not have the appearance of being cross because it is cross? Hence, all such should be abandoned forever.

Let us try from this time on to never give Him who has done and will continue to do so much for us another cross word. No one was ever peevish and cross without feeling miserable themselves.

Kindness Close Home...

Perhaps the greatest test of our kindness is with our wives and husbands right at home. Why is it that men and women will be cross to their spouses when they will not be to anyone else? I have often noticed this.

Let us be sure that we are always kind at home.

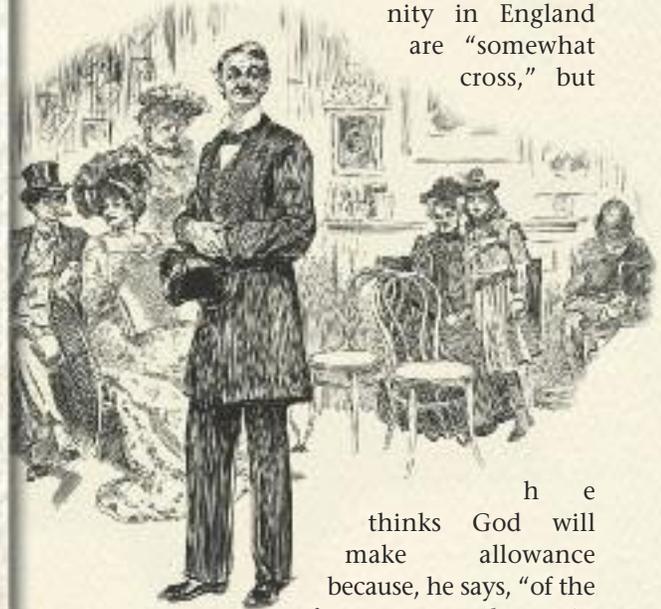
Cultivate at all times kindness to man and beast. When anything is wanted of wife, child, husband, or anyone else, do not feel too big and important to say "please." And as your requests are complied with, do not forget to say "thank you." In that way, the child, the mother, or father, will soon learn that he or she is loved and respected, and it will become a pleasure to fulfill each other's requests cheerfully, and how much better all will feel.

I know of men who look down upon their wives as though they were of very little account. This is not the Christ-like spirit. For such men I have but little or no respect. Ninety-nine cases out of a hundred it is the man that is the short, cross,

CONTINUED ON PAGE 20

The fourth verse of First Corinthians 13 says, "Charity suffereth long, and is kind." Here is the very virtue we have been talking about—kindness. "Charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up." How meek, humble, and lowly all will have to become to possess this charity that is above all else. "[Charity] doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked"—be careful, for how easily some are provoked! "Thinketh no evil; Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth" (vs. 5–6).

Bible charity is, in short, keeping all (not a part) of the commandments of God, doing the entire will of our Father in heaven. Can we be unkind in the least and have this Bible charity without which we are as nothing before God? We cannot. Though I know of one who is saying that God takes all the circumstances into account and makes allowance for our unfortunate tempers, bad organisms and trying circumstances, we cannot find any such allowance in the Scriptures of truth. The above cited brother also thinks that the members of a certain fraternity in England are "somewhat cross," but



he thinks God will make allowance because, he says, "of the foggy atmosphere in which the English brethren are living."

Let us beware that we do not deceive ourselves. God is no respecter of persons. Only those who *do* the will of the Father in heaven shall enter the Kingdom (Matt. 7:21).

Loving the Present World

Let us be careful that our affections are not set upon the foolish things of this present arrangement. The apostle John, the beloved disciple of Jesus, declares (1 John 2:15–17), "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh,

and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.” Brethren, we must get rid of all the lust of the eyes, lusts of the flesh, and pride of life.

If not, we are still part of the present arrangement and will pass away with it. It is no small matter to get rid of all evil, all lusts of the flesh, all pride of life, all lust. *“Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall”* (1 Cor. 10:12). If our affections are not upon these things of the present, we will not be doing them. Love and affection go hand in hand together, and if we have no relish, no love for the things of the flesh, we certainly will abstain from them.

Abundant Pay

Suppose a stranger should come along and tell us that he would give us a million dollars if we would go with him into the wilds—where there was much danger, where there were no comforts of life, where we would have to go on foot over the rough and rugged mountains, climbing and descending, fording wild streams. Suppose he said that it would take about three months to make the journey, and at the end he would give us a million dollars. Would we not want evidence, yes, bona fide evidence before we started that he would give us the million dollars?

So with us. Why should we be giving up the pleasures of this life and following the mandates of Christ if we did not have some good assurance that we are going to get paid abundantly for our trials and trouble? If I could not see plain evidence, I certainly would not act thus. We do not want circumstantial evidence either, but positive and sure evidence.

Never in any age has God called upon anyone to believe without evidence. Evidence has always been furnished, and no one is ever condemned for asking for evidence. Evidence produces faith.

The Bible is filled with positive, sure evidence, but we must study to find it.

What Shall We Read?

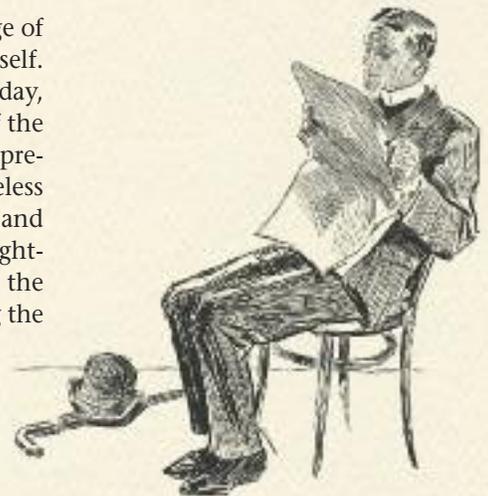
How often I have heard it remarked by some of you, “How I wish I had the knowledge of the Bible that Brother Nichols has.” Remember that this knowledge does not come of itself. It takes hard, earnest study. Neither does it come by hunting over the newspapers of the day, to see how many big fires, or great murders, or how many marriages, or anything else of the kind. Neither does it come from paying attention to the fashions of the day, and using precious time to fix ourselves up. If we would have a knowledge of the Scriptures, all useless things must be dispensed with and we in candor and real earnestness must go to work and study the truth which is in Jesus, study to be a workman that needs not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth (2 Tim. 2:15). How much more advanced we might be in the knowledge of God if we had spent the time searching the Scriptures that we spent reading the newspaper.

We can speak now of the realms of the blest, but what will it be to be there! How it fills my heart with love to God to think of it! Oh, I feel like doing more for the Lord. Oh, that I could do the work of ten. If it were not for the many cautions I receive from my dear wife and my loved brethren, I do not know but what I would soon work my life away. Seeing the truth in such beauty and glory, and knowing that nearly everyone in the world is destitute of it makes me feel as though I cannot rest. Oh, that more of this spirit might seize you all and cause a reviving of the work of the Lord in these days. For the harvest is great, and the laborers are few.

Showing Partiality

There is great danger that we will show partiality to one brother above another. Let us take two brothers, one who is passably well off, the other who is quite poor; both are equally earnest in the faith. Which one will we take the most pains for? We certainly should treat and love both alike, not respecting their possessions.

Again take two brothers, both of whom are engaged in the work of the Lord, both equally diligent, both equally well off. One is naturally a good cook, and can, given the simplest articles of food, make a relishing meal. The other has no knack to fix things up, no dexterity with tools, etc. Now suppose we pay attention to the one who can cook the best meal



Knowledge of the Bible does not come by reading the newspaper.

crabbed—what shall I say? Wretch, yes, miserable wretch. If a woman is good enough for us to love and respect before we marry her, she (as a general rule) is after. But many become cross and hardhearted just because of the cross, crabbed, brutal treatment of the husband.

I am aware that some think that my wife and I make too much of each other, that we are too kind and tender. But I would that all were as kind, as tender, as loving and courteous to each other. Are we not commanded to love our wives as ourselves? See the danger of our losing the glorious reward just because we were cross and unkind at home, to our families. In this matter it is absolutely necessary for each one to take heed, yes, earnest heed, and let every word, look, and act be a token of kindness, love and good will.

Let us show by our words and actions that we intend to obey God and be kind and courteous to all, at home and abroad. If we only set to this work in real earnestness, it will not be long before it will become second nature to us to be always kind, amiable, and courteous.

To Feel or to Speak?

A voice says, “We do not sin, then, if we only feel cross and angry, so long as we do not speak cross or angry?”

We answer most emphatically, you sin by being angry even if not a word is said.

Someone says, What do you do with Paul's statement, “*Be ye angry and sin not*”? Paul seemed to think that a person could get angry and still not sin.

No, that is only our thoughts about what Paul thought. It will be far better to let Paul himself tell us what he thought. The text is in Eph. 4:26. “*Be ye angry, and sin not*”? By his very words, Paul was implying a negative question. What! “*Be ye angry and sin not*?” which is equivalent to saying you cannot be angry without sinning. He rivets it further by saying, “*Let not the sun go down upon your wrath.*” And he plainly states further in the 31st verse, “*Let all wrath and anger... be put away from you.*”

We are not only called upon to put away all anger but also to let patience have its perfect work (Jas. 1:4), to be patient under all circumstances. When we deviate in the least iota from the plain, straightforward word and any one calls our attention to it, instead of becoming impatient or angry, we should in all meekness be thankful to have them point it out to us so that we can forever put it away from us. In whatever tone a reproof is given, we should not be in any way impatient or angry, even if the reproof be given in anger, hatred or spite. But let us be careful that we strictly follow the word in Gal. 6:1, “*Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.*”

If we all become meek and lowly of heart like our Pattern. We will put away from us ALL wrath, anger, malice, hatred, envy and evil speaking and become kind, tenderhearted, loving and forgiving. How can any lift their voice against such noble principles of truth? But though we may in words uphold such principles, actions speak louder than words. Let us ask ourselves not simply what our words are, but also, what are our actions? Do they correspond? They certainly do not if we speak a single cross or unkind word. MM

and neglect the one who has no dexterity. We would be showing ourselves a respecter of persons.

These are simple, everyday matters that we need to ponder. Let us love and respect each one for his character and virtue. Let it not matter whether one is rich or poor, a good cook or a poor cook, a good handyman or poor handyman. Let us remember that God judges by character and character alone.

Self-Importance

In performing this work of the Lord it is very necessary to pay attention to these words of the apostle Paul: “*For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly [in a sound mind], according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith*” (Rom. 12:3). Perhaps there is no commandment in Scripture more often violated than this one.

God does not look upon us as we are apt to look upon ourselves. He does not hold us in the high esteem we naturally give ourselves. The ones He esteems are those who are ceasing to do things just to be seen of men, those who are crucifying the lusts of their nature and bringing every thought into subjection to Christ, living in obedience to His royal law without sin. I say, he who thinks God will save him without doing these things is only deceived and is thinking more highly of himself than he ought to think.

It is written, “*All nations before him are as nothing*” (Isa. 40:17). Unless we make a full surrender of our entire being to Him, we too will pass away



“Pride goes to destruction...” —Proverbs 16:18

like the grass of the field, of no account before God.

When we get into this way of thinking, we will not place such a high estimate upon ourselves, and will not expect to be saved unless in reality we go to work and crucify the flesh with its affections and lusts (Gal. 5:24–26), and become *an overcomer* so that under trial we no longer transgress God's holy law.

The Old Thief “Pride”

When we see the fruits of pride, no amount of fair speeches can make us believe that pride did not produce the fruit, for Jesus said, *“By their fruits ye shall know them.”* Every tree will bear its own fruit. What would we think if we should go and find peaches growing upon an apple tree? But no, we find peaches upon a peach tree, and we have bona fide evidence that it is indeed a peach tree. And no amount of sophistry could make us believe that it is a grapevine or a thorn bush.

Let us be wise and thus shun all appearance of evil. We have too much at stake to run any risks whatever.

No Alcoholic Beverages

I heard someone justifying his desire for the intoxicating cup, saying that he only intended to drink moderately, that only occasionally would he fill the glass too full.

See what a grave tendency is thereby encouraged. See the thousands who are ruined by intoxicating drink every year. Thousands of families go hungry and half clad because of it.

Listen to the apostolic advice: *“Be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit”* (Eph. 5:18). This passage will be rigidly adhered to by every true believer, and all drink will be left behind, liquor of any kind will never once be tasted, only upon one license, and that is the license Paul gave to his son Timothy: for medicinal purposes. There is no truly safe course except in a total abstinence from the intoxicating drink. See the shame brought upon our nation because of alcohol. It can do no good and only weakens one's health and well being, leading rapidly into the ditch.

A Glimpse of Glory

Oh, the glory that awaits us! Only a little while in the future. What rapturous joy will fill each heart! What songs of praise mingled with unbounded love and eternal gladness will burst from every heart. Who would not like to be of that number, all adorned in pure and white raiment far more brilliant and glorious than mortal eyes ever beheld! Yes, far beyond all we can even ask, think, or imagine. And as the one hundred forty-four thousand thus clothed march forth with the Lion of the Tribe of Judah in His majestic splendor, what thrills, yea, what swells of glory, love and gladness will flow from heart to heart! Such bliss each heart will fill that no tongue on earth can tell. We may well cry out, oh the glory! Oh, the glory that surrounds that mighty throng. It will roll on like a mighty avalanche driving all sin, corruption and iniquity before it, until the whole world will be bathed in the sweet flowing stream of unbounded love and everlasting gladness and unspeakable happiness. This flood of glory will continue until all sin and corruption of every stripe has been buried forever in one huge pit of eternal oblivion, no more to mar the beauty, joy and comfort of the redeemed.

My heart cries out, Come, Lord Jesus and bring this sweet, endless ocean of glory!

But alas! are we ready? I trust all of you are here to get ready. I am willing and anxious to help you. I feel like the apostle Paul, *“Yea, and if I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy, and rejoice with you all”* (Phil. 2:17). My many, yes, my very many earnest, heartfelt prayers to God are and shall continue to be that we shall all be permitted to bathe together in that great ocean of bliss. To this end I constantly and energetically work.

And now may God bless each one with a full knowledge of His will and duty, and give to each one strength to perform it unto the end, so that all that soon-coming glory, bliss, joy and happiness may be ours. May the Lord of infinite mercy grant it unto one and all. Amen. MM



Thousands of lives are ruined by intoxicating drink every year.

A MEMORIAL ROCK

The Johnson family stood looking at the big maple tree lying across their yard. During the night, a fierce storm had blown the tree down. Dad was the first to speak. "God surely did take good care of us, didn't He?" he said, placing his hand on Mark's shoulder. "That really makes me stop and thank Him."

"I feel the same," said Mother as she put her arm around her daughter.

Mark looked at their house standing just a short distance from the fallen tree yet not harmed at all. "Yes," he said in awe.

"I hope I never forget to be thankful for all the things God has done for us," commented Mother.

Mark nodded. "Whenever I'm scared of something," he said, "it helps to remember how God took care of me in the past."

"We had a story in Bible Club about a memorial stone. It had kind of a funny name, but I think it meant something like 'God has helped us,'" commented Susan.

"You're thinking of the name 'Ebenezer.' I believe it's found in First Samuel—about chapter six or seven," said Mother. "The Philistines attacked the Israelites when they were gathered to worship God. They were afraid and begged Samuel to pray for..."

"Say," chimed in Mark, "was that the time God used loud thunder to scare the enemy away?"

"That's right, Mark," Dad continued. "God won the battle for Israel, so the prophet Samuel set up that stone as a memorial of God's help."

Mother smiled. "Susan, were you thinking of setting up a memorial rock of your own?"

Susan laughed. "Well, not exactly, but I thought maybe we could make a notebook of times God helps us," she suggested. "We could add to it whenever something special happens—like this tree missing our house."

"That's a good idea," agreed Mark. "Say! I know! Let's put in a picture of all of us standing in front of this big tree. Whenever we see the picture, we'll be reminded of how God took care of us."

Mother and Dad both smiled approvingly. "We can call it our 'Ebenezer Book,'" suggested Dad. "What a good way to remember all that God has done for us!"



*Always remember
God's goodness.*

HOW ABOUT YOU?

Do you have a way of remembering the things the Lord has done for you? Have you received some special answers to prayer, or has God protected you in a dangerous situation? Maybe He helped you through a hard class at school or a painful relationship. Why don't you try to keep a record of what God has done for you? Don't do it to dwell on the past, but do it to be reminded of God's great help when you are faced with a difficult situation.

GOOD FOOD

MEMORY VERSE

"Turn my eyes away from worthless things; preserve my life according to your word" (Psalm 119:37 NIV).

Let's stop at the bookstore," said Mom as she and Diana walked through the mall. "I'd like to get a new cookbook."

"All right," agreed Diana. She loved reading, and when they reached the bookstore, Diana decided to find a book for herself. Soon she was back at her mother's side. "Can I get this book, Mom?" she asked. "I have enough money for it." Diana held up a fiction paperback for her mother to see.

Mom took the book and read the back

cover. Then she opened it and leafed through the pages. "Honey," she said, "I've heard that the story line in this series of books deals with things that aren't honoring to God, and as I flipped the pages, I noticed bad language. I'm sorry, but no—you can't buy this book."

"Oh, please, Mom," begged Diana, but her mother shook her head. "Oh, all right," Diana grumbled angrily. She scowled and returned the book to the shelf.

Diana didn't say a word when they left the

bookstore, and she was still pouting when they sat down at a table in the mall's food court. Mom looked at her thoughtfully. "Did you see that, Diana?" asked Mom as she placed her packages on the table.

"See what?" asked Diana.

"The people that just left the table over there had quite a bit of pizza left over," said Mom. "I saw them dump it in the trash can right next to that second post. I'm sure there's other food in there, too. I'll stay here and watch our stuff, and you can go get some of it." Mom smiled as she spoke.

"Thanks—but no thanks!" exclaimed Diana, giving her mother a puzzled glance. "I know you don't want to eat garbage, so you can't be serious. But what's your point?"

"Well, you don't want to feed garbage to your body, either, do you?" asked Mom. Diana shook her head. "But you apparently do want to feed garbage to your mind by reading things that are filled with bad language and evil ideas," Mom added. Diana didn't have an answer. "We're responsible to God for the things we put into our minds," continued Mom. "That's why I didn't let you get that book. I want you to give your mind good things to 'eat.'"

*Feed your mind
wholesome things.*

HOW ABOUT YOU?

Do your parents set rules regarding what you may read and listen to? Do you wish you could choose for yourself? When the time comes for that to happen, remember that healthy minds need healthy "food." Don't put garbage into your mind—don't put anything "wicked before your eyes" in either print or in pictures. Read books that are good for you, and watch wholesome programs.

IT'S CATCHING

The new boy across the street is great! Jason told his mother. "His name is Tim and he likes some of the same things I do. He's got a couple bird dogs and some hamsters."

"I've noticed that Sam Wellman is often there," observed Mother. "Is Tim anything like Sam? I know Sam has often been in trouble at school. His reputation isn't very good."

"Oh, Mom!" Jason sighed. "Sam's okay."

As the weeks passed, Jason and Tim spent more and more time together. Mother was concerned. "Jason, Dad and I are concerned about you spending time with Tim. It is all right to occasionally speak to him for you want to be courteous, but your really close friends should be Christian friends," she said.

"Awwww, Mom," objected Jason. "I don't do anything wrong when I'm with Tim. I know what's right and what's wrong. You treat me like a baby." He reached down and scratched his dog's ears. "Tim offered to take care of Midget while we're gone next week," he said. "That way she won't have to go to a kennel. All right, Mom?"

"Well—I guess so," Mother conceded.

When they returned from their trip the following week, Jason brought Midget home. As he came in the door, he stubbed his toe. Mother was shocked when she heard what he said. "Do you think that kind of language is pleasing to the Lord?" she asked.

Jason hopped around on one foot, holding his toe. "I'm sorry. I didn't mean to say that, but my toe hurt so bad. Tim says it all the

time, and I guess I just picked it up."

"Then I suggest you put it down!" Mother was upset.

That evening, Midget scratched and scratched. Dad looked up. "Has that dog got fleas?" he asked.

"I don't think so," said Jason. He began combing Midget's hair with his fingers. "Oh, look! She does have fleas! There are lots of them."

"Give her a bath immediately," Mother ordered. "And use some flea powder or something. She must have gotten those fleas from Tim's dogs." As Jason got up to take care of the dog, Mother added, "And that, Jason, is why we are so concerned about your close friendship with Tim."

"You are afraid I'd get fleas?" asked Jason.

"No, not fleas," replied Mother, "but sin is contagious, too. For instance, you can pick up things like bad words without even realizing it—until they slip out."

"Oh!" Jason was quiet for a minute. "I guess that's even worse than fleas, huh? I guess Midget and I had better be more choosy about who we spend time with." **MM**

Choose friends carefully!

HOW ABOUT YOU?

Are you associating with the wrong crowd? Be careful. Your friends influence you by their talk and actions whether you realize it or not. Make sure they're the kind of friends whose influence makes you a better person, pleasing to your parents and to God.

MEMORY VERSE

"Do not be misled: 'Bad company corrupts good character'" (1 Cor. 15:33 NIV).

Did Jesus Will to Suffer?

WHAT DID JESUS MEAN WHEN HE SAID, 'I LAY DOWN MY LIFE'?

The text reads (John 10:17–18), “Therefore My Father loves Me, because I lay down My life that I may take it again. No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This command I have received from My Father.”

Pick any commentary or study guide, and you are sure to find exuberant praise for the Good Shepherd who, utterly selfless and self-sacrificing, voluntarily surrendered His life on Calvary for the sins of humanity, then three days later raised Himself from the dead to be the Savior of the world. *The Life Application Bible Commentary* reads, “The Father loved the Son for His willingness to die in order to secure the salvation of the believers. Jesus laid down His life of His own accord; and yet of His own accord He would also take up His life again in resurrection. When Jesus said, ‘I lay it down ...and take it up again,’ He was claiming authority to control His death and beyond....Jesus gave up His life; it was not taken from Him.” Also, “The Son’s authority to lay down His life and take it up again did not originate with Himself; it came from His Father.”

Says an author in the *Interpreter’s Bible*, “When we read the terrible story of the crucifixion with its horrors, and in a way even more testing, its demeaning circumstances, the impression grows and deepens that this victim, bruised, jostled, dragged about, spat upon, nailed down to a cross which was then roughly jolted into its socket, is not a victim, the mere plaything of circumstance, or the sport of His enemies, but that... He suffered because He willed to suffer. His life was not filched from Him. He gave it....That is exactly what one feels... as one stands awestruck upon Calvary” (Vol. 8, p. 628).

Personally, I find the thought too horrible to contemplate. If it were not so long established and so universally believed, it would be condemned as an outrage against a loving, merciful God who would “command” such suffering. Yet to many people, rejecting the atoning death of Christ is tantamount to rejecting Christian faith altogether.

Was Jesus saying in John 10 that He voluntarily was going to offer His life as a sacrifice on Calvary, then take it back again?

As a Church, we reject this common teaching as out of harmony with the preponderance of Bible teaching. Jesus’ willing submission to physical death was prophesied (see Isa. 53:7–8), but not that He would voluntarily offer Himself to die. Think about each of the following points seriously and prayerfully because the correct belief on this subject will determine where we spend eternity.

1. Jesus said, “I lay down my life,”—present tense—not “I will lay down my life when I die.”

It was action He was taking *right then*, not an action for some future time. Jesus was not dying when He said this, but He was sacrificing Himself in a lifelong consecration to doing the will of His Father, which began with His first act of obedience and continued until He could say triumphantly, “It is finished.” So complete was His offering that He could say, “I do always those things that please Him” (John 8:29). “I do not seek My own glory” (John 8:50). “I can of Myself do nothing. As I hear, I judge; and My judgment is righteous, because I do not seek My own will but the will of the Father who sent Me” (John 5:30). According to the prophecies, Jesus came with but one purpose: “to do Your will, O my God” (Ps. 40:8).

All during His life, Jesus was laying down His own will for the benefit of those who would follow Him. This is why He could tell His disciples, “Follow Me” (Matt. 4:19; Luke 5:27; 9:23; John 10:27, 12:26), because He was totally surrendered to doing His Father’s will. He did not just begin to do the will of His heavenly Father when He was betrayed, arrested, and crucified.

2. Jesus was murdered. He did not voluntarily offer Himself to die on Calvary in our stead.

Each time that the New Testament speaks of Jesus’ death on Calvary, it says that He was killed, crucified, taken, or murdered. Peter, speaking on the day of Pentecost, said, “Him,...you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death” (Acts 2:23). A short time later, Peter, speaking to those who were “greatly amazed” at the healing of the lame man, said, “Men of Israel, why do you marvel at this? Or why look so intently at us, as though by our own power or godliness we had made this man walk?... But you denied the Holy One and the Just, and asked for a murderer to be granted to you, and killed the Prince of life...” (Acts 3:12–15). Again, Peter, “filled with the Holy Spirit,” said, “Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified” (Acts 4:8–10). Stephen, in his defense before the Council, called them “stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears,” and then says of their action against Jesus, “of whom you now have become the betrayers and murderers” (Acts 7:51–52). The apostle Paul himself spoke of the “Judeans, who killed both the Lord Jesus and their own prophets,” adding “and they do not please God” (1 Thess. 2:15).

The apostles did not consider Jesus’ death a voluntary offering for the benefit of the believers. They did not classify it as a love offering to free guilty sinners from the penalty of their sins and cover them with a righteousness

they did not deserve. (For further discussion of this topic, see the booklet, *"The Atonement: Is It Biblical."*)

3. The Father commanded Jesus to "lay down" his life that He might take it again—?

Where do we find the Father commanding Jesus to "lay down" His *physical* life? Where was Jesus commanded to give up His *physical* life voluntarily for His brethren, His disciples, or anyone else? God Himself *condemned* human sacrifice (if God was responsible for His death). Or shall we say His death was a suicide? Never!

Jesus told something about the Father's love for Him in John 15:10: *"If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love."* He states both the condition of the love and the reason for it.

Jesus' death and resurrection were subjects of prophecy in the Old Testament. Many details were accurately foretold, and fulfilled. But a prophecy is not a commandment. A prophecy is a knowing in advance of the fact; it does not change or overpower the will of those involved in the action when the time of fulfillment comes.

4. We are commanded to lay down our life just as Jesus laid down His—and we are not required to be crucified.

First John 3:16 says, *"By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren."* If we were to take this statement of John at face value, and Jesus' prophecy laying down His life for His brethren was His death on Calvary, we would all have to submit to crucifixion, or something equivalent. John even ties the thought of Jesus laying down His life to the love of God (the passage reads *"Hereby perceive we the love of God,"* but you will notice that the words *"of God"* are italicized, meaning that they are not translated from any word in the original text; they have been supplied by the translators who thought they were needed to make the passage understandable. John is not talking about the love of God but rather of Jesus' love, because it was He who laid His life down for us.

How did Jesus lay down His life for us in a way that we can do the same for others? By His obedience to His heavenly Father, by His life of loving dedication, of noble character and service to others. He set an example of how to obey the will of the Father, by delighting to do His Father's will. All of this we can do also.

5. Jesus did not raise Himself from the dead.

In John 10:17–18, Jesus said, *"I lay down My life...I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again."* After He was crucified and buried, He did not bring Himself back to life. The apostles, speaking of His resurrection, stated clearly that *"God raised Him from the dead"* (Acts 13:30). They said it again and again: *"the God of our fathers raised up Jesus...[you] killed the Prince of life, whom God has raised from the dead...this Jesus hath God raised*

up, whereof we all are witnesses" (Acts 5:30; 3:15; 2:32. See also Acts 2:24; 1 Cor. 15:15; 1 Pet. 1:21; Acts 4:10; 10:40; 13:37; 1 Cor. 6:14; Gal. 1:1; Col. 2:12).

6. The life Jesus laid down for others was His own will, His natural desire to pursue His own course in life. Jesus was totally committed to doing the will of His Father.

When Jesus said, *"I lay down My life for the sheep,"* the word He used was *psuche*, which generally refers to one's inner life or total life. It is translated many times as "heart" or "soul," as in Mark 12:30, where we are commanded to love the Lord with all our heart and soul. The apostle Peter says that we purify our *"soul by obeying the truth"* (1 Pet. 1:22). Our hope is *"an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast"* (Heb. 6:19). The life Jesus laid down was His total being, which He gave in obedience during His whole life to do the will of His heavenly Father.

How did Jesus *"lay down His life"* for His sheep? By showing a pattern of a life fully surrendered to doing the will of His Father. He said, *"I seek not mine own glory...I can of mine own self do nothing...because I seek not mine own will but the will of the Father which has sent me"* (John 8:29, 50; 5:30). In the same way He suffered, *"leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps"* (1 Pet. 2:21). How can we be like Him in His suffering? Not in His suffering on Calvary, but in His relinquishing His own will, in not resisting evil or holding any ill feeling against His tormentors; but even praying, *"Father, forgive them for they know not what they do"* (Luke 23:34).

Christ laid down His life by dying to every sinful tendency. Being tempted in all points like we are, yet without sin (Heb. 4:15), He set the example for us, and we must follow His steps. *"For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God. Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord. Therefore, do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts"* (Rom. 6:10–12).

7. A shepherd, however "good," however much he "loved" his sheep, did not protect or care for his sheep by dying for them—how could a dead shepherd benefit the sheep? Christ as the Good Shepherd gave His life for the sheep not by dying for them but by being committed to their welfare and care.

Jesus says that the Good Shepherd *"gives his life for the sheep"* in contrast with the *"hireling,...who does not own the sheep,"* who when he sees danger coming *"leaves the sheep and flees"* (John 10:11–12). The contrast is in the level of commitment. The owner of the sheep, being responsible and fully committed to their care, stays with them to protect them in danger, while the hireling runs away. If Jesus meant that the Good Shepherd should be self-sacrificing and give His life to die for the sheep when he sees the wolf coming, the sheep would have no protector. The owner takes steps to keep the sheep safe from

Did Jesus Will to Suffer? CONTINUED FROM PAGE 25

the wolves, while the hireling flees. The point is the level of commitment to stand by during danger, not to satisfy the wolf's appetite by dying in place of a sheep.

Why, why, why?

Why did Jesus die? Because the motley mob incited by the wicked Jewish rulers demanded His life. The Gospels record that His enemies were jealous of Him (Matt. 27:18; Mark 15:10), and jealousy is as cruel as the grave (Song of Solomon 8:6).

Jesus did *not* want to die on the cross. He submitted to the will of His heavenly Father. His death was His final act of obedience in a life of total dedication to doing the will of His Father.

Jesus died as an example to believers who would follow Him, who would also have to give their lives to retain their loyalty to God.

Jesus showed in suffering the perfect example of non-retaliation. *“Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps: Who committed no sin, Nor was deceit found in His mouth; who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously”* (1 Pet. 2:21–23).

Jesus laid down His life for us, and as the apostle says, we should likewise lay down our lives for our brethren, setting the same example of total sacrifice, and all with a view to the eternal life God has offered. His death was not suffering for the sake of suffering, but *“for the joy set before him”* (Heb. 12:1–2)—the joy of being seated at His Father's right hand; the joy of returning with all His holy angels to set up an eternal Kingdom here on earth for all His faithful followers, and bringing about a glorious state of heaven on earth.

This was Jesus' prayer, and it is ours also until that great Day of the Lord arrives and the promise of the angels is fulfilled: *“This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven”* (Acts 1:11). **MM**

FEAR...FROM THE OTHER SIDE

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2

every thought in their mind! Each of them needed to hear: “Don't fear”—because fear in the presence of a glorious immortal is “normal.” Who could be so cold or insensitive as to be unaffected by the presence of one who has been living perhaps for millenniums, who bears the name of God, and who has in his hand the power to give or withhold your very LIFE!

If I am ever granted the privilege of seeing firsthand an angel of God, I want to hear those same words: *“Don't fear!”*—because I tremble in the Divine presence; because I am so small and God is so great that I am filled with reverent awe for the holiness, omnipotence, and authority of God.

This fear from the other side, *“the fear of the Lord,”* will be security in the Day soon to come. The God of heaven has given His word. Soon Christ is going to make Himself known, and everyone will have to decide whether to fear God or man, when the ultimatum is sounded: *“Fear God, and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgments has come”* (Rev. 14:7).

I want to be on God's side then. Don't you? **MM**

ANSWERS FROM PAGE 27:

FEAR—(Afraid)

1. Abraham (Gen. 15:1)
2. Hagar, about her son Ishmael (Gen. 21:14–18)
3. When the Lord spoke to the people at Mt. Sinai the first time (Heb. 12:20–21)
4. Because they had found the money in their sacks that they had taken to pay for the grain (Gen. 43:1–18)
5. Because *“the Lord your God He shall fight for you”* (Deut. 3:22)
6. Daniel (Dan. 10:10–12)
7. He was afraid the King would blame him, and might even threaten his life, if Daniel and his friends did not look as hale and healthy as the rest of the captives (Dan. 1:10)
8. *“Therefore we will not fear”* (Ps. 46:1–2)
9. *“Whom shall I fear?”* (Ps. 27:1)
10. *“The sinners in Zion are afraid; fearfulness has seized the hypocrites”* (Isa. 33:14)
11. *“Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God”* (Isa. 41:10)

12. *“...Serve Him in sincerity and in truth, and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the River and in Egypt. Serve the Lord”* (Joshua 24:14)
13. *“In God have I put my trust: I will not be afraid what man can do unto me.”* (Ps. 56:11)
14. God told Jacob in a vision, *“Fear not to go down into Egypt; for I will there make of thee a great nation.”* (Gen. 46:1–3)

FEAR—(Reverence, Respect)

1. Moses (Ex. 20:20)
2. Samuel (1 Sam. 12:24)
3. The people had gathered together to request a king, and the Lord had sent thunder and rain which was unusual at the time of the harvest (1 Sam. 12:15–18)
4. King Saul, when he returned from battle with the Amalekites and had not carried out God's command but spared Agag and the best of the sheep, the oxen, the fatlings, the lambs, and all that was good (1 Sam. 15:1–24)
5. Job (Job 1:1)
6. Psalm 23:4. The Psalmist did not fear evil because he was confident God was with him.
7. *“The fear of the Lord is to hate evil”* (Prov. 8:13). *“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom”* (Ps. 111:10). *“The fear of the Lord is wisdom”* (Prov. 9:10; Job 28:28).
8. Mary, in her prayer after being told she would be the mother of the Messiah (Luke 1:50)
9. Proverbs 28:14, *“Happy is the man that feareth alway.”*
10. *“She shall be praised”* (Prov. 31:30)
11. *“Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is the whole duty of man”* (Eccl. 12:13)
12. *“With fear and trembling”* (Phil. 2:12)
13. *“Riches, and honor, and life”* (Prov. 22:4)
14. Around those who fear God (Ps. 34:7)
15. Those who fear God (Eccl. 8:12)
16. *“Fear the Lord and depart from evil”* (Prov. 3:7)

TWO KINDS OF FEAR

Fear is an unpleasant emotion we feel in anticipation of danger, hurt or harm. We are afraid, scared, frightened, often by something unknown. Many people in the Bible felt this very human emotion. They feared enemies, losses, pain, death.

The Bible uses the word fear to describe this emotion, but it also uses “fear” in a good sense: fearing God. The “*fear of the Lord*” is not being scared or frightened. To fear God is to have reverence for His holiness and greatness. It is “a state of piety and respect,” to “show profound rever-



ence toward a superior” (*Strong’s Greek-English Dictionary*).

What happens to us as individuals when we “fear the Lord”? Because He is so great and awesome, because His knowledge is as far above ours as the heavens are above the earth, and because the breath of every living creature is in His hand (Job 12:10), having reverence for God leads us to trust Him, to apply His laws to our lives with total respect for His authority.

The first set of questions pertain to our feeling of fear or fright in the presence of perceived danger. The second set points up the benefits of having a reverent regard for God’s law and authority, which is life-changing.

FEAR (Afraid)

1. Who was the first man in the Bible whom God told to “fear not”?
2. What mother, fearing for the life of her child because they were living in the wilderness, was told not to fear, and even that her son would become a great nation?
3. When did Moses “exceedingly fear and quake”?
4. What made the sons of Jacob fearful of the governor of Egypt who had sold them grain out of Egypt’s storehouses?
5. When preparing to enter Canaan, why did Moses tell the people they did not need to be afraid of their enemies?
6. Who was told to “fear not” because his prayer had surely been heard? God immediately sent an angel, who touched this man on the shoulder.
7. Why was the prince of the eunuchs afraid of displeasing the King when Daniel and his friends refused the king’s fare?
8. What did the Psalmist say is the result of God being our refuge and strength and a very present help in trouble?
9. Complete the verse: “*The Lord is my light and my salvation: _____.*”
10. What class did Isaiah the prophet say would be seized with fear of the judgments of God.
11. Complete this text from Isaiah: “*fear thou not, _____; be not dismayed, _____.*”
12. Complete Joshua’s final words of advice to the people of Israel: “*Now therefore fear the Lord and _____.*”
13. What did David say about fearing what man could do to him?
14. Jacob had misgivings about relocating to Egypt, even though it was to preserve their lives during a time of severe famine. How did God assure Jacob that it was the right move?

FEAR (Reverence, Respect)

1. Who told his people, “*the fear of the Lord shall keep you from sinning*”?
2. Who said, “*Only fear the Lord, and serve Him in truth with all your heart, for consider what great things He has done for you*”?
3. What happened that caused the people to “*greatly fear the Lord and Samuel*”?
4. Of whom was it said that he “*feared the people*” more than he feared God? What had he done that showed he did not fear the command of God?
5. Of whom was it written, that he was “*blameless and upright, one who feared God and shunned evil*”? He lived in the land of Uz.
6. Which very popular Psalm declares, “*I will fear no evil*”? What was the Psalmist’s reason for not fearing evil or harm?
7. How does the Bible define the fear of the Lord?
8. Who quoted the Old Testament when she said of the mercy of God, that it extends “*to those who fear Him from generation to generation*”?
9. What Proverb associates fear and happiness?
10. What is said of the woman who fears the Lord?
11. What was Solomon’s final conclusion about the whole duty of man?
12. What did the apostle Paul advise about how we should work out our salvation?
13. Complete this verse “*by humility and the fear of the Lord are _____.*”
14. On what condition does the angel of the Lord camp and protect?
15. Finish the verse “*Though a sinner does evil a hundred times...yet I know that it will be well with _____.*”
16. Complete the verse: “*Be not wise in thine own eyes: _____.*”

ANSWERS ON PAGE 26



THE AWESOME GIFT OF SIGHT

Thank God for Your EYES!

Of our five senses, eyesight is the most important. Sight is most closely associated with our sense of self and of our surroundings. Sight is said to contribute to 85% of our total knowledge. Our eyes contain about 70% of the body's sensory receptors. Other than the brain, the eye is the most complex organ in our bodies.

What an awesome gift the Great and Almighty Creator has given us and the animals on this earth! Practically every creature has a form of vision that is ideally suited to its particular needs. To even entertain the idea that such an intricate and superbly efficient organ could have designed itself or come about by a series of chance occurrences is beyond reason.

MOISTURIZING AND MOVEMENT

The **adult human** eye is about one inch in diameter. Only about 1/6th of its surface is exposed. The rest of the eye is safely enclosed in the bony **eye socket** and padded by fatty tissue at strategic points. The eye is further protected by the **eyelids**. The eyelids not only cover our eyes to protect them but they wash our eyes with moisturizing, cleansing tears about 15 times every minute—that's about 15,000 to 20,000 times a day! Blink! and it has happened again, an involuntary movement we hardly notice.

The movement of each of our eyes is controlled by a set of six **eye muscles** which are attached to the white part of the eye (the **sclera**) in such a way that the eye can turn, allowing us to look in many directions—left, right, up, down—at will. The movement is so smooth we are not even conscious of it.

HOW THE EYE WORKS

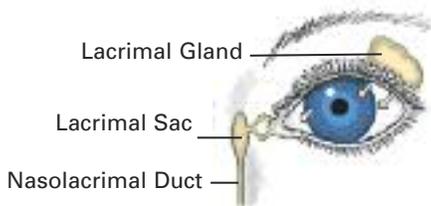
When you look at an object, exactly what happens? Think about the Designer who planned this marvelous process that makes the difference between daylight and dark every day for every one of us! Without the organ of sight we would all be in total darkness!

What happens, in simplest terms, when you look at an object?

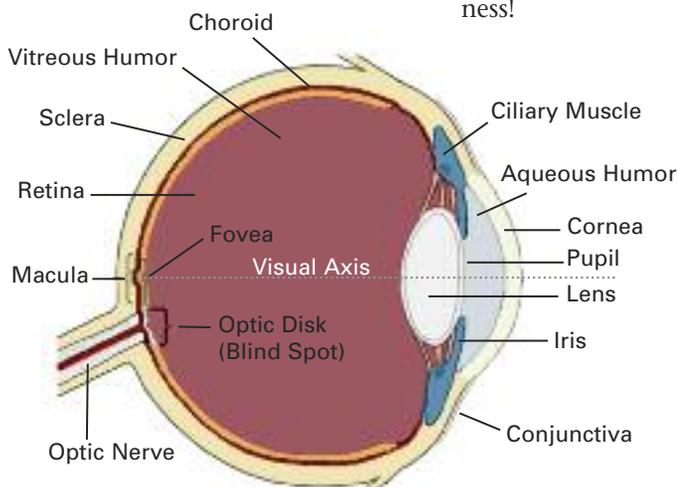
1: The light reflected from that object enters your eye through the **cornea**. The cornea is a hard, clear cover that is attached to the white part of the eye (the sclera). The cornea bends the light rays as they enter the eye so that the rays are directed toward the lens. (Note this: the cornea has nerves to sense pain but it contains no blood vessels. Why? Because blood vessels would interfere with clear vision. Isn't this solid evidence of a Designer?)

2: The light then passes through a space filled with a transparent fluid called **aqueous humor**. This fluid fills the front of the eye between the cornea and the lens and provides the cornea and the lens with oxygen and nutrients. It also helps them hold their shape.

3: Next the light passes through the **pupil** to the lens. The pupil is actually a hole whose size is controlled by the iris. The



The tear ducts (lacrimal system) produce tears to clean, moisten and lubricate the eyes. The excess fluid drains into the nose. Such a simple concept, but how critical to the health and comfort of the eyes!



(Side view) Cross section drawing of the eye

iris is like the shutter on your camera. It controls the amount of light entering the eye by constricting the opening when the light is bright and dilating when there is little light.

4: The **lens**, a marvel of itself, focuses the light on the retina in the back of the eye, forming an upside-down image. Being flexible, this lens makes it possible for you to read the print on the page in front of you, then look up and see a mountain that is several miles distant. (Actually this is true only in perfectly shaped young eyes. As we age, the lens in our eyes loses its flexibility so that it no longer focuses as well, and we need corrective lenses, or glasses.)

MARVELOUS RETINA

What makes us able to see? The retina in the back of our eye is made up of light-sensing cells called photoreceptors. The retina contains approximately 125 million of these photoreceptors. They are of two kinds: **rods** and **cones**.

Rods, the most numerous, pick up an image that is grainy and colorless, but they are very sensitive to dim light. The rods permit us to detect light that is over a billion times dimmer than what we see on a bright sunny day. The rods are powerful enough to discern the light of a candle 14 miles away under ideal conditions.

The **cones** pick up color and sharper images in bright light. Three kinds of cones populate the retina. Each is “tuned” to absorb light from a specific part of the light spectrum—here is another marvel showing us the work of our Designer. Long-wavelength cones absorb the reds, middle-wavelength cones absorb the greens, and the short-wavelength cones absorb the blues. Working together, they pick up information about billions of shades of color.

Overall, there are fewer cones than rods in the retina. But in the center of the retina, at the back of the eye, is the **macula**. This part of the eye is the most sensitive. Only about ¼ inch in diameter at its center, in this area only cones are found. The macula is responsible for picking up fine details. From this area we get our 20/20 vision. When the macula is damaged, as in macular degeneration, one can become legally blind.

The **optic disc** is the area where the optic nerve and blood vessels enter and leave the eye. In this area, neither rods nor cones are found. This is the cause of our “blind spot,” yet we are hardly aware we have a blind spot because one eye covers the blind spot for the other eye and the brain cancels it out when it interprets the image—another evidence of our Designer’s work!

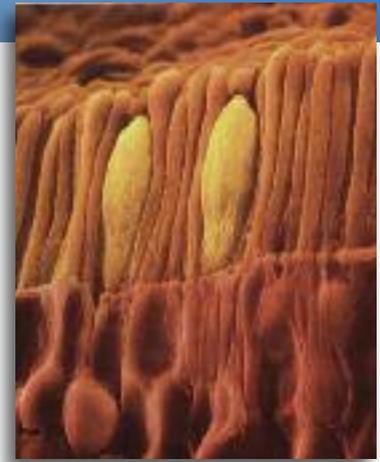
INTERPRETING THE IMAGE

How does the light entering the eye become an image we recognize?

The retina converts the light that strikes its rods and cones into an electrical impulse that is passed on to the brain by the **optic nerve**.

Light travels through the eye and arrives on the retina as an inverted image. Here, light penetrating the layer of photoreceptor cells is encoded for color perception in the brain. Long **rods** translate dim light into shades of gray so we can see shape and movement. Shorter **cones** absorb spectral light, enabling us to see myriad hues.

How awesome is the eye’s design!
We too often take this precious gift of sight for granted.



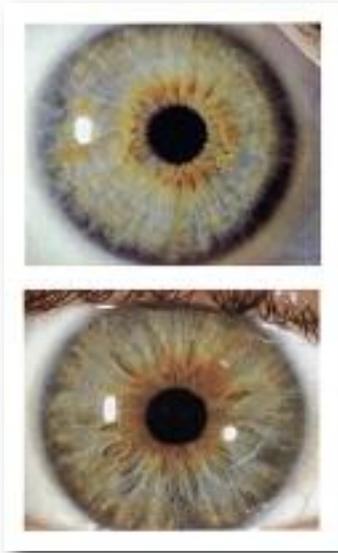
Rods and cones magnified 6,000 times

DID YOU KNOW?

- ✓ One million plus nerves make up the optic nerve in each of our eyes.
- ✓ Each of our eyes contains about 125 million light-sensing cells.
- ✓ The external muscles that move the eyes are said to be the strongest muscles in the human body for the job that they have to do.
- ✓ The adult eyeball measures about 1 inch (2.5 cm) in diameter. Of its total surface area only one-sixth is exposed—the front portion.
- ✓ The eye is the only part of the human body that can function at 100% ability at any moment, day or night, *without rest*. Your eyelids need rest, the external muscles of your eyes need rest, the lubrication of your eyes requires replenishment, but your eyes themselves “never” need rest. (But please rest them!)
- ✓ Eyes are your most precious sense—care for them properly!

Your EYES:

- ✓ Are the most complex organs in your body except for your brain.
- ✓ Are composed of more than two million working parts.
- ✓ Can process 36,000 bits of information every hour.
- ✓ Under ideal conditions, can discern the light of a candle at a distance of 14 miles.
- ✓ Contribute towards 85% of your total knowledge.
- ✓ Utilize 65% of all pathways to the brain.
- ✓ Can instantaneously set in motion hundreds of muscles and organs in your body.



Diversity and uniqueness show up in so many areas. For example, the pattern of the iris differs even in identical twins.

What happens to the electrical impulses when they enter the brain?

First of all, the eye and brain divide what we see into the right and left half. Some of the image from each eye goes to each side of the brain, right and left. A relay station decodes the visual information before sending it to the central processing area of the brain, where all the tiny bits of information are put together and—we see a picture! The visual information also goes to the areas that control language, feelings and memory. Here the information is identified—the face is given a name, and the decision is made about how we should react—run, laugh, cry, etc.? Decision is also made about whether the information should be filed away in memory for future reference, or simply forgotten.

All of this happens in a millisecond of time with very little—if any—control on our part.

Does anyone really believe this intricate mechanism is the product of chance? Exceedingly more complex than any machine designed by man, it attests to the awesome Designer, the Almighty Creator.

Every part of the eye is essential to clear vision, and a good connection to the brain is imperative. How could such a complex system have come about by any unguided process, even given billions of years, without Divine Design? It could not! The God of heaven and earth designed every part of it! Let us give Him the credit and honor He is due!

The more we learn about the handiwork of the Great God of Heaven, the more inspired we should be to serve Him faithfully. Then we can experience this promise: “No eye has seen, no ear has heard, and no mind has imagined what God has prepared for those who love him” (1 Cor. 2:9). MM

Sources:

<http://users.ren.com/jkimball.maultranet/Biology/Pages/V/Vision.html>

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*I will praise You, for I am
fearfully and wonderfully made;
Marvelous are Your works,
And that my soul knows very well.
— Psalm 139:14*

BE THANKFUL

“How gloomy you look,” said one bucket to another as they hung above the well.

“Ah!” replied the second bucket, “I was thinking how useless all this is; for no matter how full we come up, we always go down empty.”

Then the first bucket commented: “What a strange way to look at it. I have always been thankful and happy that, however empty we go down, we always come up full.”

Both were filled alike. The difference was in their perspective.
What kind of bucket are you?



If you forgot to start today with a smile,
start practicing now for tomorrow.

Don't sit down and wait for some opportunity to knock at your door. Make use of the opportunity that is now knocking.

Regret can be an appalling waste of energy—you can't build on it.

*There will always be a bumper crop of food for thought in God's Book.
What is needed is people to harvest and eat it.*

COUNT YOUR BLESSINGS

“He took bread, and gave thanks” (Luke 22:19)

Even in the shadow of His cross Jesus gave thanks. He was going out to suffer and die, yet Jesus spoke to His disciples of peace, good cheer, hope. What an example to His disciples and to us! Truly, it is not what happens to a person but how we take it and what we do with it that counts.

Are we guilty of forgetting our blessings and dwelling on our troubles? Do we remember a week of illness longer than a year of good health? Can we be content with what we have, even when others seem to have much more?

Our Christian faith ought to save us from such unhappy, ungrateful thoughts. Pride and selfishness are often at the root of ingratitude—the unsettling feeling that we do not get what we deserve. Yet daily we have so many blessings if we will but stop to appreciate them.

Let us give thanks even in our difficulties!

*It is amazing what our blessings add up to
if we take time and pains to make the calculation.*

Learn from the mistakes of others—
you can't live long enough to make them all yourself.

Give to
your enemy, forgiveness
your accuser, a soft answer
your opponent, tolerance
your spouse, love and support
your child, a good example
your parents, deference
everyone, kindness and cheer
but to your God, your heart.

Silence can be a great peacemaker.

Man is no bigger than his ability
to do little things well.

*The attitude and hope of a Christian
makes life a positive existence
all the way.*

Faults are like the headlights of a car:
those of others seem more glaring than
your own.

*Regrets over yesterday and the fear of
tomorrow are twin thieves that rob us of
the moment.*

If you fear people will know what you
do, don't do it.



Thankfulness

Father, we thank You for bountiful care,
Blessings and beauty abound everywhere!
Proof of Your mercy and signs of Your love,
Gifts that are sent from Your storehouse above.

Blessings of faithfulness, mercy and peace,
New ev'ry morning, they ever increase;
Help us, kind Father, Your warnings to heed,
Prove by our lives we are thankful indeed:

Thankful for friendships, for strength and for health,
Better are these than dominion and wealth.
But help us, O God, to appreciate more
The gifts that You hold for the faithful in store.

And this one petition we ask of You, Lord.
Help us to never depart from Your Word;
For of all the blessings of age or of youth,
None can compare with the jewel of Truth!

–Contributed